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ABSTRACT

Nine chapters and an introduction discuss the issues surrounding school closures and declining enrollment and suggest practical solutions. Each chapter examines a particular facet of the problem, presents brief case studies of successful experiences, and mentions sources for further information. The topics covered include: (1) demographic changes and enrollment projections; (2) the need for prior planning; (3) school board policy-making on district goals, community involvement, and eleven other issues; (4) improvement of communications and public relations; (5) the options of leasing, selling, demolishing, or finding alternative uses for closed school facilities; (6) legal and psychological problems involved in layoffs and reductions in force; (7) program or curriculum change to prevent erosion of educational quality; (8) financial problems associated with rising costs and declining enrollment; and (9) the special problems involved in closing high schools. (RW)

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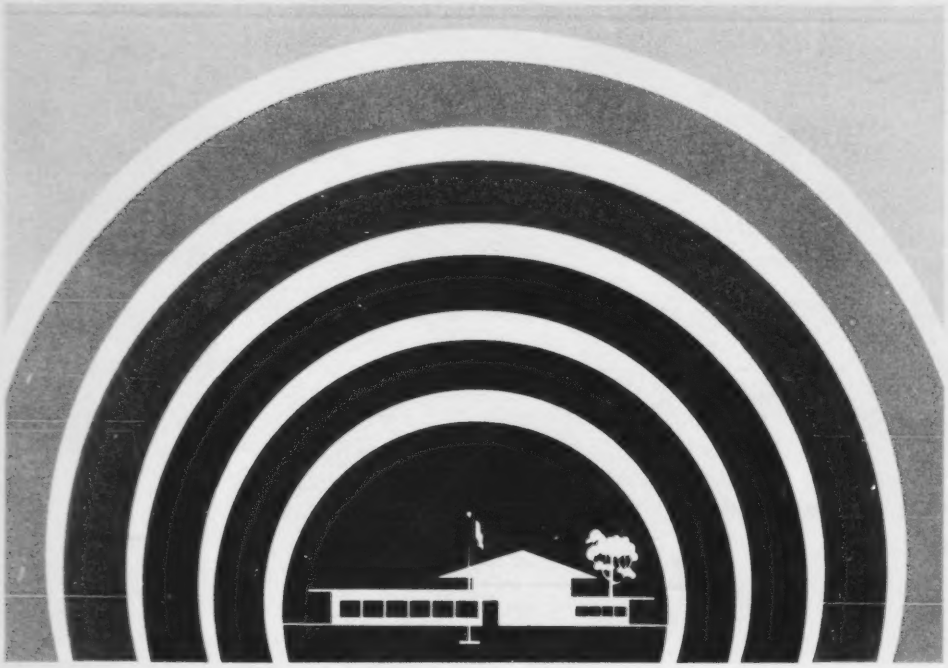

DECLINING ENROLLMENT— CLOSING SCHOOLS

Problems & Solutions

American Association of School Administrators

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The AASA Critical Issues Series

Many of the critical issues facing schools today are controversial. Some are new. None has a single best answer. Yet, administrators and boards of education must determine what is best for their communities. Realizing this, the American Association of School Administrators saw the need for a new series of in-depth reports to help administrators and boards make decisions and solve problems.

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Our thanks to all those who helped — administrators and other school personnel, school board members and experts in various fields.

The manuscript was written by Ben Brodinsky, an education writer based in Old Saybrook, Conn.

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Chapter I

Introduction

The year 1981 marked the 10th in which America's school districts and their administrators — more than two-thirds of them — were enmeshed in problems growing out of enrollment decline. The date is somewhat arbitrary. But it is sufficiently accurate to indicate that administrators and their school boards have had at least a decade of travail, pain and frustration deciding how to do with less.

During the past decade, administrators have made mistakes, learned new lessons, dispelled false notions and vain expectations and, as a result, are better able to serve public education — not as managers of decline, but as managers of change.

A Look at the Record

Toward the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, administrators had no scheme or pattern for coping with empty schools. No college course ever prepared administrators for a loss of students or for closing of schools. Stunned, shocked or bewildered, administrators used their native intelligence to meet the distressing situation. They headed staff studies of present and future enrollments; they presented sane arguments to their boards for the need to close schools; they even sought, in peremptory or desultory fashion (as events would later prove), the advice of the public. Then came the "rush to close" and the announcement to the public of final decisions.

"Rush to close" is a phrase used by board members and some administrators as they reviewed their early (and often unsuccessful) attempts to respond to declining enrollments. It was of little concern to the community that the district administration and staff had spent many months in preparation for the announcement of closure. For many communities the decision to close came too suddenly. Many early efforts to involve the community in seeking solutions for declines were too short and too shallow. "The people wanted to be soaked, or to soak themselves, in facts, arguments, concepts before giving their approach on closing a school," one educator said.

A typical news story on school closures of that early period ran: "Stung last year by criticism of its school consolidation policy, the school administration is following an elaborate schedule of citizen review before a final decision is made." The sting has taught school administrators the great lesson for the period of decline: "Involve the community." This injunction appears on one out of every five survey forms returned by administrators for this report.

Administrators have learned that disposal of a surplus school is something that cannot be done quickly. Months of planning are required. But the 10-year record for the reuse of vacant schools, as it appears in 1981, is one of haste to relieve the school board of responsibility for surplus schools. "Sell 'em . . . raze 'em . . . get rid of 'em" were the inclinations of school authorities during the first phases of decline. True, many schools were either old, dilapidated or located in such undesirable environments that they were properly marked for oblivion, with the district getting what it could realize in return.

But hindsight now shows that some school administrators did not appreciate the precious resource that lies even in a vacant school. Imagination and resourcefulness, with the help of the total power of the municipality or even state, can turn a former school into the means for revitalizing a neighborhood, for providing essential social services, for stimulating cultural and creative activities and even for historic preservation.

People outside of education often see the new opportunities for surplus schools more clearly than educators or board members. And the view that is

currently seeking ascendancy is that disposition of schools is not a matter for school authorities alone to decide. State legislators, fiscal and legal experts, economists, town planners, mayors and governors have come to see the potential value of vacant schools. Even the federal government is in the act: The General Accounting Office in Washington is studying ways to make productive use of vacant schools — and it's an effort that is of interest to that much publicized figure, former Representative David A. Stockman, now President Reagan's director of the budget.

At the start of the 1978-79 school year, the Comptroller General of the United States sent a questionnaire to the 50 states about school closings.

The findings:

"There were 2,943 vacant schools in 19 states. Well over one-third of them were in good condition and located in areas that made them suitable for continued use."

When asked in June 1981 about the number of vacant schools, the comptroller's office declined to give a precise answer, but it estimated there were probably 6,000 closed schools in at least 40 states.

Two pieces of Congressional legislation should be mentioned here. The Surplus School Conservation Act (S.792, introduced in 1977) would make grants to local municipalities and counties for 80 percent of the cost of converting surplus schools for productive educational and social service purposes. If this concept is enacted into law, either by the federal government, or more likely by state governments under the president's new federalism, it would help bring into a neighborhood fledgling nonprofit organizations that might not otherwise be able to shoulder the costs of renovation. The community would be the beneficiary of such actions. Another piece of proposed legislation would amend the Internal Revenue Code to encourage business to purchase school buildings (S.793, introduced in 1977). Again, neighborhoods and towns would benefit from the employment offered by the industries.

Meanwhile, the practical, immediate advice to school authorities is this: Be slow and deliberate in selling or razing school buildings. Give first consideration to leasing. Its advantages, especially of the lease-leaseback contract, are worth considering.

False Hopes and Hard Facts

The first inkling of enrollment decline brought to the surface hopes — some false, some well-meaning, some prejudiced. The most egregious of these was the hope among some members of the public that fewer pupils would mean smaller school budgets. People not friendly to the public schools, in fact, demanded reduction in school expenditures as the number of pupils steadily, if slowly, continued to shrink.

Hopeful parents and teachers looked for smaller classes and greater attention to individual pupils now that there were fewer of them; while in other quarters there were those who hoped for "a trimming of the school bureaucracy" and the elimination of "weak-sister" teachers. Others looked for cutbacks in educational offerings and services. In an acute observation on these tendencies, Robert F. Savitt noted when he was superintendent of a shrinking district on Long Island: "The forces of reaction in our community are seizing upon enrollment decline not only to close buildings when they are not needed and to cut staff when it is unnecessary, but literally to go right to the heart of the

"Public reaction to the announced closing of a school may be compared to the stages a patient goes through when told he has a terminal illness. First, there is denial — 'No, not me; I'm not going to die.' Then comes anger — 'Why me?' Next is the bargaining stage 'Lord, if you'll just let me live, I'll reform.' This is followed by depression — 'I can't stand it.' Finally comes acceptance — 'I've had a good life, but now it's time to get my affairs in order.' In the process of closing a school, some administrators may be tempted to concede to one of the earlier phases of public reaction. But if you persist, you'll reach the point of the public's acceptance by all but a very few."

— Supt. Larry Zenke, Tulsa (Okla.) Public Schools.

educational process in a way they haven't been able to do before."

The hope that fewer pupils will mean savings in school dollars persists and springs up anew in every community which first comes to face current conditions. This is a false hope, a vain hope, but hard to dislodge. Logic and facts are on the side of superintendents when they point to the hard realities of inflation and the need to maintain school services whether there are 400 students in a building or 300.

The experiences of hundreds of school districts demonstrate that despite fewer students, they need as much and usually more money to operate schools.

Still, it will remain the common lot of most superintendents to continue to joust against these vain and sometimes selfish hopes of some sectors of the tax-paying public.

What about the expectation of those who look for positive outcomes? Some of these can be realized — not as an automatic result of fewer students, but as the result of new and comprehensive efforts to reorganize, reform, change and improve school systems for the years ahead.

Debacle or Opportunity?

During the first half of the 1970s, the first inclination of superintendents was to bewail the drop in enrollment and to name themselves as managers of decline. Only later, and coincidentally at about the time that AASA launched its survey for this report, did an increasing number of superintendents regain their positive posture and start to see themselves as managers of change, or managers of transformation or reorganizers of education.

The change of attitude did not come easily to the superintendency. As Supt. David M. Russell of the Gardner (Mass.) Public Schools puts it:

"We were brought up on growth. Growth permeated the whole educational scheme. In many school districts across the country, double sessions, staggered sessions and found spaces were used to relieve overcrowding. The passage of bond issues one after another was the first priority of many a school board and administration. We were managing growth in an atmosphere of abundance.

"Then came decline — a condition almost unknown in American history. For many superintendents, decline carried with it the beginnings of debacle or disaster."

Russell pointed out that even the dictionary definitions for growth and for decline include words which have a positive ring for one and negative for the other:

Grow	Decline
Thrive	Wane
Flourish	Decrease
Mature	Lessen
Increase	Fail

Russell's advice is noteworthy: "To cope effectively with decline, we have to think of it other than as shrinkage and empty schools. We must view it as a neutral, descriptive term used to indicate a direction of *change*."

The respondents to the survey for this report divide about evenly among those who view current and future enrollment conditions as a positive force and as a negative force. There are as many who see no silver lining as there are who see strong light breaking between the clouds.

"Crisis or opportunity?" Russell asks. "Our efforts should aim at searching for ways to reduce the possibility of the first and make the second seem more probable."

Short Sights and Long Aims

"Close a school and solve the problem" has never been an appropriate approach to declining enrollments except for the innocents among the public (and possibly a few in the profession).

Yet, at the beginning of the past decade the procedures for school closings have dominated in many school districts. Worse, the emphasis was on the economic aspects of the closing: "How much will we save? How much will we realize from closings, from sales, from rentals?" The impact of

> ***"Be careful about rushing in with the school closing and disposition package that worked well for someone else. It may meet all the technical and legal requirements; however, timing and community and staff support are essential. This means that any plan must be suited to the particular characteristics, needs and interests of your own community."***
>
> — California Association of School Business Officials, School Closure Survey, January 1979.

Looking for the Silver Lining

"What, in your opinion, is the silver lining of declining enrollment?"

Here's how administrators answered that question in interviews and as part of their reply to the **Critical Issues Survey** for this report:

"I see declining enrollments as an opportunity to break with tradition and improve the curriculum."— Richard C. Richmond, assistant superintendent, Monte Vista, Colo.

"We save about $80,000 a year for each elementary school we close." — Joseph Davis, superintendent, Columbus, Ohio.

"Declining enrollment gives you an opportunity to reorganize your district into a more productive unit." — Robert J. Gourney, administrative assistant, Durham, Ct.

"As schools become smaller, discipline tends to improve. Pupils are better known to teachers and administrators, and pupil self-image can be enhanced." — Thomas McCarthy, superintendent, Tupper Lake, N.Y.

"Decisions regarding transfers of staff require that building principals work together and confront the less competent teachers. With decline, the less-than-competent teachers can no longer remain ignored." — John Washburn, superintendent, Brighton Central School District, Rochester, N.Y.

"We have been able, through restaffing and rescheduling, to save money and to use fewer teachers. This has served to make principals more aware of problems of financial management and has stirred their imagination to be more innovative in their approaches to education in general." — Robert F. Dunda, director of personnel, Alhambra Elementary District No. 68, Phoenix, Ariz.

"As a result of actions taken to meet declining enrollments, we will have to become a tighter organization, more careful in our use of resources, less willing to jump on any passing bandwagon, more attuned to public desire in the programs and courses offered." — James H. McGoldrick, assistant superintendent, Bristol (Pa.) Township School District.

"Declining enrollments will force us to eliminate bureaucratic inertia." — John F. Hauck, superintendent, Region Four, Detroit Public Schools.

"If the district can tie RIF to a good evaluation procedure, weaker staff may be reduced and the stronger staff will lead to better education for our children." — Trois G. Hill, director of federal programs, Holly Springs (Mass.) Separate Schools.

"We can find the silver lining only by encouraging community education and community recreation and by involving a wider segment of the community in the utilization of our buildings." — John W. Stofflet, superintendent, Menasha, Wis.

"I see declining enrollment as an opportunity to redirect funds from classroom teacher accounts to other purposes that have not been met for a long time." — Joseph Cirasuolo, superintendent, Clinton, Ct.

"Declining enrollment places us in a position to realign priorities. We must now take a close look at what we're doing and select the things that are important, discarding those that are not." — Harry S. Westcott, superintendent, Charlestown, N.H.

"Declining enrollment forces us to study alternatives to the delivery of educational services." — Richard Johnston, superintendent, Alamosa, Colo.

"Declining enrollment a problem? No. It'll help us to get people off the champagne appetite." — C.M. Hawkes, superintendent, Brigham, Utah.

"Declining enrollments give citizens an opportunity to participate actively in restructuring education. Citizens on planning committees especially achieve real appreciation of school problems and serve as a bridge to the larger community in describing our problems." — Robert M. Hill, assistant superintendent, Davison, Mich.

"The advantages of smaller schools are brought out by declining enrollments, and we can see that these advantages outweight the cost. Bigger schools have not meant better education." — Patricia A. Correia, assistant superintendent, Lincoln, Mass.

declining enrollments on the educational programs, on staff, on grade organization, on redistricting — these and other problems associated with decline came in second for consideration in many school districts.

Yet, conditions in most school districts called for more than the panacea of school closures.

What shook public education in the late 1970s and early 1980s was not declining enrollment alone. Decline was accompanied by or associated with events and trends, some unexpected, others gathering in force and intensity. Responses to the AASA survey indicated that "declining enrollments couldn't have come at a worse time"; that also hitting the schools were:

- Rising energy costs.
- Inflationary pressures.
- Erosion of public confidence.
- Tax revolts ("and such problems as Propositions 13 and 2½").
- White flight.
- Intensified migration ("South, Southwest and West").
- Mandated programs (for the handicapped, the bilinguals).
- Loss or drastic reductions in federal and state aid.
- Court decrees for desegregation, redistricting, busing.
- Changing, eroding or disappearing neighborhoods.
- The competition of private schools.
- Aging population.
- Aging teachers.

In view of such cataclysmic forces, closing and consolidation of schools were a short, partial and inconclusive response.

"Education is in a life crisis and declining enrollments is but one manifestation," one administrator wrote in longhand on the margin of one of the AASA surveys.

It would follow that declining enrollment provides the opportunity in a time of crisis for strong action and new ventures into school administration.

Note this view, for example, from Supt. George W. Bailey of the Adams County School District 12, Northglenn, Colo.:

"The period of declining enrollment and decelerating resources is only part of the continuing cycle of educational change. Educators must look upon this period as an opportunity to evaluate and improve educational programs."

Educators, Bailey advised further, will have to:

- Be bold and enthusiastic about education and its role in society.
- Be planners and managers of the educational enterprise. It is not possible to change the ebb and flow of population waves, but the crests and troughs can be predicted.
- Use technology to simulate the alternatives.
- Project educational costs and outcomes for a minimum of five years.
- Learn to be politically active to compete with other public agencies.
- Be able to deal with conflicts, bringing together those of divergent views to accept the limits of public response to individual preferences.

The chapters that follow report actions currently under way in many school districts: planning, involvement of the community, reorganization of grades, new dedication to the neighborhood concept of schools, redistricting to achieve a healthy mix of students, changes in curriculum and program, the search for sounder financial bases (as against elusive grants from Washington).

There are also new and imaginative actions with regard to reuse of vacant space: a recognition that an empty school is more valuable than its land, brick or mortar; that old schools are new resources for building coalitions with the community by sharing vacant space; and by putting the schools to use for civic, social service, cultural and educational purposes under community sponsorship.

The Search for New Clients

Among proposals heard at educational conventions and described in educational journals is one suggesting that the public schools should look for, and attract new clients. Most frequently mentioned are that schools should become involved in preschool education and expand vastly the programs for adults, with special emphasis for working women and the elderly.

The argument is that business adopts to new demographic conditions, why not education? In a memorable incident at one of the early conferences on declining enrollment (sponsored by I/D/E/A, in 1975), a vice president of Johnson & Johnson Baby Products rose to say that his company, too, depends on fertility and a high birthrate, but when the birthrate began declining, his company initiated a search for new customers. Johnson & Johnson started persuading the public that "baby products" are just as good for adults as for babies. The result was that by 1975, said the marketing executive, "our business was twice the size it was 5 years ago and three times the size it was 10 years ago. The number of babies had gone down by a third during that

Minicourse on Closing a School

"Declining enrollment — so what's the problem?" asks the new board member. "School closings? Why in the world?" asks a citizen who has not been following developments in the educational community. For these individuals, and others who want a quick run-down on the problem, here is a minicourse based in part on material used by Supt. George G. Garver, Livonia (Mich.) Public Schools:

Why close a school? There are three major reasons why a school district would consider closing a school when enrollment declines:

- Money — It becomes uneconomical to operate a school that is not used to capacity or used to partial capacity.
- Program — It becomes expensive to provide quality education when the number of students continues to decline.
- Obsolescence — The school building is too old or requires expensive repairs to house students.

How do you close a school? You study the long-range population and student enrollment trends. You share the information with staff, community, civic groups, parents of children who will be affected by the closing. Then you select a school for closing — and allow two years or not less than 18 months to close the building.

How do you select one school over another in deciding closing? You take into consideration the size of the student body in the school building. You consider the age, size and location of the facility. You assess the adequacy of the educational environment. You take up the questions of costs to maintain the building, to provide transportation for pupils and, most important, to operate the educational program within the school. The community is a partner in all discussions. When a building rates poorly on these and other factors, prudence suggests that it should be closed.

What do you do with a vacant school? You can sell, lease, raze or use it to provide extra space for your own personnel.

What is the usual community reaction to school closing proposals? You may expect anger, frustration and the question, "Why *our* school?" Ultimately, if adequate facts are provided to the community, it will accept the closing and even support other proposed closings.

How do students and their parents react? There is concern. To minimize it, administrators can provide opportunities for students and parents to visit the new school and, in some cases, to move teachers with the students to their new classrooms. It also helps to have policies and plans for the disposition of equipment purchased by parent groups, disposition of activity money and school-owned equipment, and even for the distribution of memorabilia.

What effect does enrollment decline have on elementary programs? Elementary school buildings may lose some full-time personnel, split-level classes may be necessary, larger classes may have to be instituted. Overall, however, effects on elementary programs are not too serious.

What about the effect on junior and senior high schools? Here the impact is more serious. Schools at these levels may have to offer fewer courses and curtail their extracurricular activities. Principals and supervisors may ask teachers to take on classes in their minor fields of preparation. Teacher morale and teaching quality may suffer — that is the bottom line on instruction.

How may teachers be helped? Keep teachers informed of long-range projections and plans. Work closely with the local teachers association. Provide inservice activities. This may help reduce teachers' stress and recharge their batteries. Offer early retirement incentives. In spite of all such efforts, staff morale problems may still exist. Change creates trauma.

What else can a school district do to cope with declining enrollment? A wide range of actions and measures can be used — from reorganizing grade structures and school district consolidation to revamping the curriculum. And don't forget that oft-neglected measure: Pray.

time." Moral: You have to find new markets for the products you are selling.

Serving more than children and youth through community-centered schools has been a noble dream for education for generations. The idea received some support from respondents to the survey for this report, but it is weak and scattered. Its greatest appeal is to superintendents from states such as Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, where community-oriented schools have had considerable success. Still, in nearly all other states, school administrators saw glimpses of opportunity to reach out to new clients in limited measures. At most, they were ready to place the school buildings at the disposal of community and nonprofit groups with capacity to carry on educational or cultural efforts. But there was no push in 1981 for mass enrollments under the public school banner for the very young, their mothers, employed young people who could profit from postsecondary education, nor for the elderly. There were some indications in the survey responses that by the mid 1980s, as the high school enrollment continues to dwindle and high school facilities become available, some efforts may emerge to attract young adults, adults and the elderly to the public schoolhouse.

Transformation of the High School?

All projections point to continued decline in the secondary school population at least until the end of this century.

Doing something about the high school will occupy the attention of many school districts for years to come. As AASA Executive Director Paul Salmon points out in this report, closing and consolidating secondary schools are tasks which will require twice the patience and administrative leadership required in closing elementary schools. School district officials will have to call upon all the skills, strategies and tactics they have learned.

Willy nilly, however, hundreds of high schools will be closed during the next five years. The tough nut to crack is not how to close a high school, but what to do with the high school you have left.

Will it continue to be held in the clutches of tradition — on a reduced scale? Or is this the time for transformation?

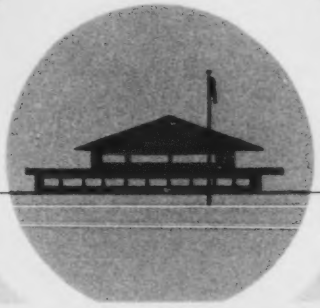
"The need for transformation, the need to inquire into the quality of our high schools, is absolutely urgent," said Ernest Boyer, a former U.S. Commissioner of Education, now head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching in Washington. The occasion was the launching, in 1980, of a new study into the character and future of the American high school.

Studies of this nature are nothing new. One has been launched about every 10 years since 1893, when the famous Committee of Ten made its first stab at reforming the secondary school curriculum. Since then there have been such historic efforts as those of the Commission on the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education (1917) and to take a long jump in time, of James Conant (1960) with his widely read report. More than 100 national, regional and professional organizations have sought to adapt the American high school to the needs of each generation in this century.

The high school, like a cemetery or an iceberg, has resisted change. Is the decade of the 1980s the decade for bringing into being a new type of secondary school? And is the jolt of the downward enrollment curve the force that will help do it? As this report indicates, it's possible.

Chapter II

Demography



One of the lessons which emerged during the first decade of enrollment decline is that every school superintendent must be his or her own demographer.

The experts in Washington and state capitals can help — in a limited way. Specialists are on sure ground when reciting events of the past, less sure when looking into the future. Experts concerned with national trends are at times helpful; the state demographers are a bit more so. But neither can give a district the hard, sure data on which administrators and boards can act with confidence. A district must develop these facts for itself.

Of course, national figures help and are interesting. Here is the nationwide picture on enrollment — past and future.

The Story Up To Now

Once upon a time, the classrooms of America's elementary and secondary schools were crowded and overcrowded; the shops, labs, corridors, playgrounds and playing fields were teeming with youngsters. The year was 1971, and enrollment in all grades of the public schools stood at just over 46 million — a figure never before reached.

The drop in enrollment began in the fall of 1972. It showed up first in grades K-8. It was a modest one, causing little alarm. Only statisticians saw the portent of the drop, drop, drop — less than 1 percent each year through 1975. But in 1976, enrollment was down 1.1 percent; in 1977, 1.7 percent; in 1978, 2.2 percent. The rate of the decline was increasing. The records for the fall of 1979 show the sharpest drop in pupil membership in a single year within the past decade — a decrease of 2.4 percent. The shrinkage occurred in grades K-8. Enrollment in grades 9-12 began a rise in 1972. In fact, secondary school enrollments continued upward until 1976, when the decrease began to affect the high schools. Even now statisticians see no clear end to decline for the high schools.

Where It Pinched and Where It Hurt

When federal statisticians drew a map of percentage changes in public school enrollments by state, from fall 1971 to fall 1979, they saw a variety of conditions:

- These states had enrollment increases: Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Idaho, Nevada, New Hampshire, Texas, Utah and Wyoming.
- These states showed a decrease of less than 5 percent: Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.
- These states showed a decrease of 5 to 9.9 percent: Alabama, Hawaii, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Vermont and Washington.
- These states had decreases of 10 to 14 percent: California, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey and Wisconsin.
- These states had decreases of 15 percent or more: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, New York, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and South Dakota.

Dip into the Future

The table on page 13 shows projections beginning with 1979. That is because statisticians are always a year or two behind the actual events, even though they think they can project into the twenty-first century.

The table shows the worst will be over by 1984. In that Orwellian year, enrollments for grades K-8 will

reach the low point of 26.4 million. Then will come the upturn, which the table projects into 1988.

But for grades 9-12, no upturn is in sight — neither by 1988 nor possibly by 2000.

So much for the projections of the federal statisticians. One more side glimpse into the future can be found in the work done by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). This group's statistical work under William R. McConnell is concerned with projections of high school graduates.

WICHE's projections are for graduates of public high schools in the 50 states (three states included nonpublic school graduates). They show a universal pattern for the years 1979 to 1995:

- The number of high school graduates will decrease from the 1979 level to a low point in the 1984-87 period.
- There will be an increase, in some cases, very slight, to 1988 or 1989.
- Another decrease will occur to a low point in the 1990-94 period.

The Past and the Future in Enrollments

This table is one of the main sources of information about enrollments of the past and the future. It comes from *Projections of Education Statistics to 1988-89*, published by the National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education.

For more information about the document from which this table comes and about the center's work in projections, contact the National Center for Educational Statistics, 1001 Presidential Building, 400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202; phone (301) 436-7900.

Enrollment in Grades K-8 and 9-12 of Regular Schools: United States, Fall 1968 to 1988

(In thousands)

Year (fall)	Total public and nonpublic			Public			Nonpublic		
	K-12	K-8	9-12	K-12	K-8	9-12	K-12	K-8	9-12
1968	50,744	36,626	14,118	44,944	32,226	12,718	5,800	4,400	1,400
1969	51,119	36,797	14,322	45,619	32,597	13,022	5,500	4,200	1,300
1970	51,309	36,677	14,632	45,909	32,577	13,332	5,400	4,100	1,300
1971	51,181	36,065	15,116	46,081	32,265	13,816	5,100	3,800	1,300
1972	50,744	35,531	15,213	45,744	31,831	13,913	5,000	3,700	1,300
1973	50,329	34,953	15,377	45,429	31,353	14,077	4,900	3,600	1,300
1974	50,053	34,521	15,532	45,053	30,921	14,132	5,000	3,600	1,400
1975	49,791	34,087	15,704	44,791	30,487	14,304	5,000	3,600	1,400
1976	49,316	33,606	15,710	44,316	30,006	14,310	5,000	3,600	1,400
1977	48,577	32,936	15,640	43,577	29,336	14,240	5,000	3,600	1,400
1978	47,611	32,055	15,556	42,611	28,455	14,156	5,000	3,600	1,400
Projected									
1979	46,657	31,422	15,235	41,557	27,822	13,735	5,100	3,600	1,500
1980	45,796	30,989	14,807	40,696	27,389	13,307	5,100	3,600	1,500
1981	44,958	30,637	14,321	39,858	27,037	12,821	5,100	3,600	1,500
1982	44,111	30,395	13,716	39,111	26,795	12,316	5,000	3,600	1,400
1983	43,766	30,301	13,465	38,666	26,601	12,065	5,100	3,700	1,400
1984	43,591	30,128	13,463	38,491	26,428	12,063	5,100	3,700	1,400
1985	43,748	30,248	13,500	38,548	26,448	12,100	5,200	3,800	1,400
1986	44,080	30,651	13,429	38,780	26,851	11,929	5,300	3,800	1,500
1987	44,473	31,395	13,078	39,073	27,495	11,578	5,400	3,900	1,500
1988	44,974	32,259	12,715	39,374	28,259	11,115	5,600	4,000	1,600

- There will be an increase in 1995, the last year of the projection.

In 1979, about 2.85 million students graduated from high school. Using this figure as a base (even though projections for this year varied among different statisticians), here are the percentage changes in public high school graduates from the 1979 level:

- A drop of 18 percent in 1986.
- A drop of 13 percent in 1988.
- A drop of 26 percent in 1991.
- A drop of 22 percent in 1995.

Picking states at random, here are some decreases of high school graduates from the 1979 level, for the years 1987, 1988, 1994 and 1995:

New York State: drops of 25, 24, 43 and 42 percent, respectively.

Massachusetts: drops of 20, 20, 43 and 42.

Pennsylvania: drops of 24, 23, 39 and 37.

Maryland: drops of 17, 16, 35 and 31.

Less precipitous are the decreases in the South and South-Central states, calculated for the years 1986, 1989, 1993 and 1995:

Florida: drops of 15, 5, 13 and 9.

Tennessee: drops of 10, 0, 12 and 6.

South Carolina: drops of 12, 2, 13 and 7.

Regional variations show up sharply in Texas, which will gain 8 percent in high school graduates in 1989, 1 percent in 1991 and 10 percent in 1995. Similarly, Arizona, Idaho, Nevada, Utah and Wyoming may have substantial increases.

Projected Public High School Graduates 1979-1995

Percentage Change from Level Estimated for 1979

United States

1986	1988	1991	1995
−18	−13	−26	−22

Northeast Region

1987	1988	1994	1995
−22	−22	−40	−38

Northcentral Region

1986	1988	1994	1995
−23	−20	−32	−28

Southeast and Southcentral Region

1986	1989	1991	1995
−12	−4	−13	−7

Western Region

1985	1988	1991	1995
−14	−7	−16	−2

Northeast Region: Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont.

Northcentral Region: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Southeast and Southcentral Region: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia.

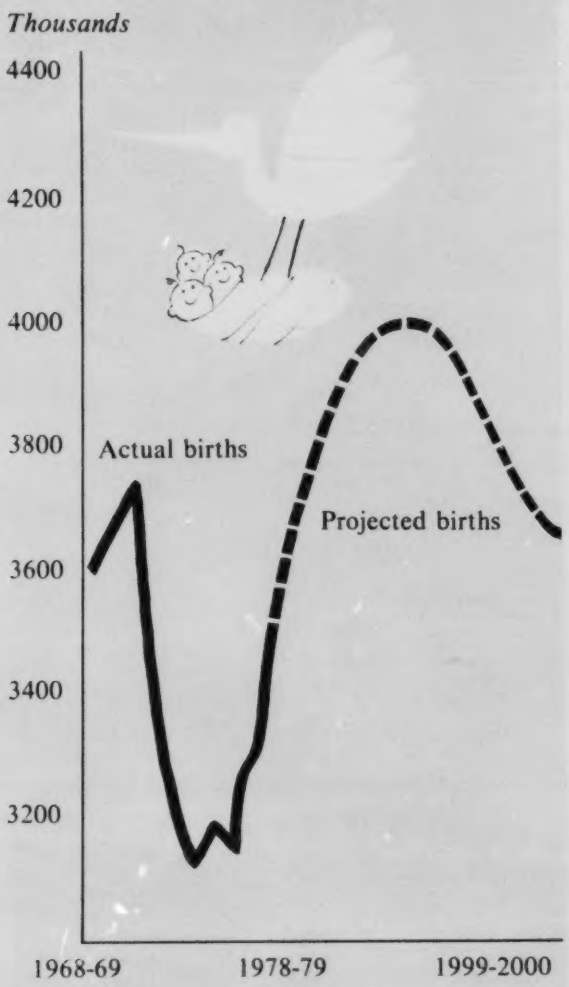
Western Region: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Source: *High School Graduates: Projections from the Fifty States*, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Boulder, Colo.

Births

The number of births, after declining for 20 years, began to swing upward in the late 1970s. Although peoples' decisions about the number and timing of children are difficult to project, the Bureau of the Census expects the number of births to continue rising moderately through the mid-1980s as more and more women enter the prime childbearing ages. Around 1987, births are expected to begin another decline.

Births Are Expected To Rise for a Few Years

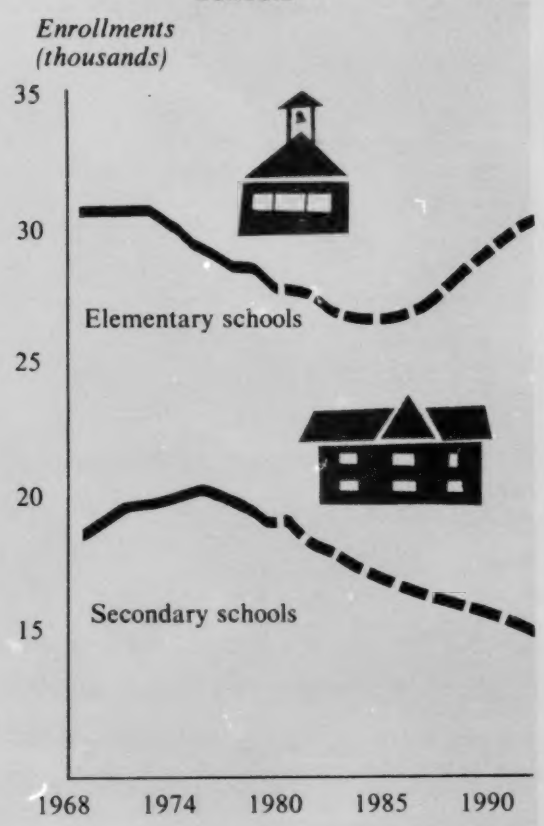


Source: **Bureau of the Census,** *Population Estimates and Projections, Series P-25,* Nos. 704 and 807.

Enrollments

Enrollment trends closely follow the trend in births by 5 years at the kindergarten level, 6 years at the first grade level, and so on. Kindergarten and elementary school enrollments are thus expected to decline through 1982, swing upward in 1983, and continue rising through the 1980s. The impact of a larger student population will not be felt in enrollments of 6th graders (12 years old), however, until 1990. Secondary school enrollments will not be affected by the increase in births until after 1990. They are expected to continue their gradual decline through the 1980s, reflecting the decline in births during the 1960s and 1970s.

Enrollments Will Rise in Elementary Schools and Decline in Secondary Schools



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, *Projections of Education Statistics to 1988-89.*

Chapter III

Planning

Plan! Plan! Plan! Those words (in triplicate and with exclamation points) were a common response of superintendents to the following question on the survey for this report: "What are the most prudent steps a school district can take to prepare for the impact of declining enrollment?"

Conversely, when asked "What one mistake should school districts confronted with declining enrollment avoid?" the answer was often "Failure to plan ahead."

Planning, therefore, rates high with school administrators. This has not always been so. Traditionally, many school districts, especially small, rural districts and those existing in atmospheres of political power pulls would not, or could not, embrace the doctrine of planning. Some districts, in fact, prided themselves on "playing it by ear" or, of necessity, simply carried out the dictates of the board members who were in control at the moment.

Declining enrollment changed educators' attitude toward planning and entrenched the process more firmly than ever before. Further, where planning *had* been in existence, as in many large, affluent and forward-looking districts, its nature changed. Prior to the start of enrollment decline, planning had been a function of the superintendent alone, or of the superintendent working with board members or with staff. This pattern still holds in some districts. But today citizen planning committees dominate the planning for management of enrollment decline. The citizen groups operate under different names and are often concerned with more than the dearth of students and the closing of buildings.

Planning: A Definition

What is planning? What are its components? "Any action the administration takes *before* the final decision of closing a school is a planning action," said one New England superintendent in an interview for this report. Another added: "Getting the facts is half of planning. Analyzing and testing them against your goals is the other half."

Respondents to the survey for this report and those interviewed named a wide range of activities as belonging in the planning process, including:

- Getting facts about the physical condition of school buildings and their facilities.
- Getting facts about the educational services the schools offer.
- Acquiring the views of citizens through public hearings, public opinion polls, written comments and expressions at board meetings.
- Projecting district population and student enrollment.
- Devising and offering alternatives to school closings or consolidation.
- Preparing timetables for school closings.
- Preparing timetables and procedures for reduction in force.
- Estimating, prophesying or guessing the consequences of board actions taken to cope with declining enrollment.

Working with Citizen Planning Groups

A school board gambles when it turns to citizens for help in long-range planning. Will the citizen group be productive? Will it generate practical advice and recommendations? Will it bog down in detail or controversy? Will it challenge board authority or threaten board influence as the community's leader in education?

To reduce chances of failure and to increase potential for success, wise boards of education prepare for the appointment of planning groups which are to consist either entirely or partially of citizens. Board guidelines for membership, oper-

ation, responsibility, limits of jurisdiction and termination of activities constitute a useful charter for such groups. "Make guidelines as specific as possible," some administrators urge. Others say citizen groups are best guided by "general principles that encourage creativity," rather than by rigid guidelines.

There is no disagreement among administrators, however, on one thing: The long-range planning task force is a valid resource for school districts.

The growth of planning groups has been stimulated by declining enrollment during the past five years. They have been concerned, however, not only with enrollment but with the fate or future of the entire educational system of a community.

The following reports on planning groups illustrate differences in how they operate and what they consider important in efforts to cope successfully with enrollment decline.

Plan? Yes. But for Which Future?

Some school boards expect the administration or a citizen planning group to produce firm and certain blueprints for the future. In a fourth attempt to satisfy the expectations of the board for a three-year plan, Rudy Gatti, superintendent of the Santa Clara (Calif.) Unified School District, told his board that adjustment and possible conflict are about the only certain factors for the coming years.

Gatti listed the factors that make planning difficult:

"If decline in enrollment were a single phenomenon, it would be relatively easy to manage. But other phenomena are occurring simultaneously, and each impinges on the other. The costs of operating a school system are constantly rising, and pressures for program expansion are ever present." Gatti added that educational designs for the future will be affected by many factors, including the direction that requirements will take for racial balance in schools, special education, handicapped students, female athletic requirements and bilingual education.

Under conditions of constant change, what should be a district's philosophy for planning? Gatti told his board that the district's philosophy of the future is bound to these two simple principles:

1. **"We cannot and should not expect to know the future for certain."**
2. **"What happens in society at large will affect the schools."**

The school community, Gatti said, should plan for "whatever future it thinks desirable and work to make that future happen. But we should expect the future of our schools to interact with several emerging and divergent societal features."

Moorhead, Minn.: Board Urges 'Use Citizens'

Even before the creation of the District Long-Range Planning Task Force in 1980, the Board of Education in Moorhead, Minn., publicly and repeatedly expressed its position that "the public has vast resources of training and experience useful to schools. The strength of the local school district is in large measure determined by the degree to which these resources are tapped in an advisory way . . . ."

In its specific charge to the planning task force, the board reiterated the point that the task force was to serve in an *advisory* capacity and to make recommendations for "preserving educational quality during a period of financial stress produced by levy limitations, declining student enrollment, high energy costs and inflation . . . ."

How the planning task force came into being is worth noting. After the board approved the general concept of a long-range planning project, it appointed a steering committee of 2 board members, 10 citizens, 7 staff members and 2 students — 21 in all.

In written statements, the board made clear that the steering committee was to report directly to the board and that its charge was to prepare a "final and composite report of recommendations for the board's consideration."

The board authorized the creation of five study groups to provide the steering committee with facts and recommendations. The steering committee was required to submit to the board names of prospective members for these five subgroups. Appointments were made by the board. The areas of concern for the study groups were: (1) staffing/program/instruction; (2) needs, cost and operation of buildings; (3) finance; (4) public information; and (5) school building status studies on closings.

The board further set up a timeline for the operation of the task force and its several committees. (The original plan was to ask the steering committee to present its final report in less than a

year.) Lastly, the board decreed that the steering committee and its study groups would cease to function "at the time the board determines that action be taken as a result of the task force report."

The steering committee and the five study groups were given written statements of purpose and specific charges. The charges were, in effect, assignments for research or procedural activities. Here is a sampling:

Charges to the steering committee: Coordinate the activities and recommendations of all five study groups . . . serve as liaison with community organizations interested in long-range planning . . . publicize the need for citizen participation . . . prepare the final report to the board . . . .

Charges to staff/program/instruction study group: Update the school district's philosophy . . . identify the district's short- and long-range curriculum goals . . . develop various staff and grade organizational plans projected through 1985 . . . .

Charges to finance study group: List projected increases and decreases in expenditures and revenues through 1985 . . . project the district's bonded indebtedness through 1985 . . . identify financing alternatives . . . .

Charges to buildings study group: Identify major capital improvements, maintenance and repairs through 1985 . . . report on facility/room usage of each building and project unused capacity through 1985 . . . report on operating costs of each building and site . . . .

Charges to public information study group: Create a public awareness of declining enrollment in the district . . . organize formal presentations to community groups . . . organize public hearings as requested by the steering committee.

Charges to school building status study group: Study criteria used in other school districts faced with school closings . . . develop criteria for the district to use in evaluating buildings for future use . . . compile recommendations on timelines for any future school closings and student displacement . . . .

Baltimore Offers Instrument for Studying Facilities

In Baltimore, planning stems from the leadership of the city's Office of Advanced Planning. This office is responsible for making periodic reviews of educational facilities and for answering two questions: "How adequate is each facility for the present? Will it be needed in the future?" Basic to the process is an instrument titled "Survey of Educational Facilities."

The survey brings together scores of facts about a school building and the community it serves. Included are facts about the educational program, the nature of the community, the condition of the school plant and characteristics of the staff.

Here is a random selection of the many survey items included in the instrument:

- Does the school offer programs not found elsewhere in the area?
- Does the school offer adult or recreational programs?
- Do real estate developers plan to build in the area and thus stimulate growth of student population?
- Does the building have historic value?
- Is the building accessible by public transportation?
- Does the building contain any unique equipment?
- Does the building need maintenance work (new boilers, new roof, etc.)?

Should the survey and other reviews indicate that a school is scheduled for possible closing, the superintendent publicly identifies the facility. Baltimore officials state: "Whenever the possibility of closing a school is raised, there will naturally be concern by the people and elected officials. To respond to these concerns, one full year is provided between the time a school is first considered for phaseout and the actual closing."

Moorhead district officials characterized the planning task force and its operation as follows:

> The Board of Education was in control of all phases of the task force committee and study groups .... Students from grades 7-12 were members of the steering committee and of each of the five study groups .... Administrators, teachers, aides, secretaries and transportation, custodial and food service employees were represented on the steering committee and the five study groups .... Parents, nonparents and single parents from all geographical sections of the district were nominated to serve on the task force ....

Sheboygan, Wis.: 8-Point Plan For Examining Issues

Long-range planning in Sheboygan, Wis., goes back more than a decade. The process intensified starting in 1976 as declining enrollment raised the question of future directions for the Sheboygan Area School District. A Long-Range Planning Committee was authorized by the Board of Education. In turn, the planning committee sponsored additional groups that were concerned with population projections, school organization, adequacy of buildings, school boundaries, staffing ratios and administrative organization patterns.

Proposals, options and recommendations followed in rather quick succession. To evaluate the ideas that began to emerge, the planning committee worked out a set of guidelines against which each option could be measured.

What the Sheboygan district was really after, the planning committee said, were proposals which would:

- Maintain the concept of a multi-neighborhood elementary school organization.
- Establish boundary arrangements which would result in a minimum amount of transportation.
- Work toward an optimal size for middle schools of between 500 and 700 students and for high schools of between 1,000 and 1,500 students.
- Provide equal facilities throughout the school district.
- Provide long-range flexibility of buildings (so they would be adequate for future population changes).

It took time before the various committees concerned with substantive matters learned how to examine an issue and how to follow through with recommendations. This was especially true when it came to making proposals on school programs and organization. Eventually, the committees and subcommittees followed this pattern which they found useful in developing background and recommendations on issues:

1. **State the issue.** Explain the issue briefly. List the important questions to be answered or decisions to be made.
2. **Define key terms.** Select from the issue statement the key terms related to the issue. Include not only technical terms but also the terms that are basic in the discussion and subject to various interpretations. Terms such as "early childhood," "open school," "neighborhood" and "middle school" are examples of terms that require definition and agreement. Definitions should be expressed as simply, clearly and briefly as possible.
3. **Summarize background information.** Summarize any relevant local, state or national history or background related to the issue. Include a review of major issues or trends. Useful reports, articles or publications could be appended or used as references.
4. **State the options.** Review the various positions that could be taken in answering the questions or making the decisions in the statement of issue. Include a range of options, even those that may seem impractical or inappropriate.
5. **State the pros and cons on each option.** Review briefly the advantages and disadvantages from various points of view in relation to different factors for the several options stated. These might be arranged in chart or outline form.
6. **Recommend an option.** Select the option that seems best. If there is not clear agreement on a single option, select more than one and list them in order of preference.
7. **Give a rationale for selection.** Review the reasons for selecting the recommended option(s).
8. **State implications for the school district.** Indicate what effects acceptance of the recommendation(s) would have for the school district in terms of facilities, major equipment, staff, effects on the community or other factors.

Arlington Heights, Ill: Citizens Opt for Quality

The chief contribution of the Long-Range Planning Task Force of the Arlington Heights (Ill.) School District was to inform the Board of Education that, above all, the community values (1)

quality education, (2) breadth of program and (3) the neighborhood school.

The task force "seriously" sought out individual and group comments on the district's schools. "Quality education was of the highest priority to the people," the task force reported to the board. Although "quality" was not concretely defined, it meant, for some, good teachers and good administrators and, for others, a positive climate and healthy atmosphere for teaching.

"Breadth of program" was also named as a component of quality education. Learning centers, instrumental music, programs for learning disabilities and physical education were identified as parts of breadth of program.

Members of the community, the task force told the board, "felt that a wide range of services, programs and personnel was essential to quality education."

The task force found that the concept of neighborhood schools meant convenience of access. Citizens wanted schools within walking distance of students' homes so parents could easily get to their children at school in case of illness or emergency. Nearness of school to homes, citizens pointed out, also promotes social contacts among children after school and makes it easier for parents to become active in school-related events.

Significantly, however, the task force found that parents were willing to trade some of the conveniences of neighborhood schools for quality and breadth of school programs. This was so because for some parents the concept of the neighborhood school was not *always* geographic. Some families felt they were in the same "neighborhood" if they were in the same socioeconomic-ethnic group, even though they were not living on the same street. This sense of neighborhood, the task force said, is a source of comfort and support for families. "While school closings might disturb this feeling of neighborliness, they will not destroy it," the task force added. "Many parents were therefore willing to give up the security of neighborliness if they could be assured of good schools."

These findings strongly influenced the final decision of the Arlington Heights Board of Education in its reorganization of the schools due to declining enrollment.

Columbia Heights, Minn.: Middle Schools Recommended

A common practice of long-range planning committees is to submit alternatives for school organization to absorb the shock of declining enrollment. Not so for the Long-Range Planning Steering Committee in Columbia Heights, Minn. After two years of work, the steering committee knew what it wanted: middle schools.

"The steering committee recommends that the middle school concept become the future pattern of the district," the group told the Board of Education. Specifically, the steering committee urged:

- That the K-5, 6-8, 9-12 organizational structure be adopted beginning with the 1982-83 school year.

Who Should Serve on a Citizen Task Force?

When the Livonia (Mich.) Board of Education first planned the appointment of a citizen advisory task force in 1977, it proposed the following membership structure: three representatives from the local school board advisory council (with the stipulation that the appointees shall be parents of students in a senior high school, junior high school and elementary school, respectively); three from the PTA Council (again, parents with students in schools of the three levels); one representative from the League of Women Voters; one representative from a major realty association. In addition, the board authorized each employee union in the public schools to name a person as ex officio member of the task force.

Further, the board asked that the mayor of Livonia appoint a member of the city commission (not an employee) and that the Chamber of Commerce, Livonia Jaycees, the Federation of Civic Associations, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party each appoint a representative.

- That the 6-8 school (that is, the middle school) be adopted as an educational concept, not simply as a physical grouping of students.
- That professional staff (especially those who would be involved in the 6-8 school) be provided with appropriate inservice training.

The steering committee urged that ample time be provided for the adoption of the middle school concept — time for the Board of Education to become familiar with it, time for establishment of an inservice committee on middle school instruction and time for adequate curriculum development.

Local and technical considerations led to the recommendation for adoption of the middle school concept for Columbia Heights (for example, dollar savings in closing elementary and junior high schools and minimum disruption of student transportation routes).

But the steering committee pinpointed "solid educational reasons" for recommending the middle school concept:

> The middle schools offer opportunities for personalized individualized instruction that teachers could be trained to provide . . . . They offer sixth graders opportunities to become socially successful and carry over their success into subsequent grades . . . . Instructional programs in the middle schools would be flexible, but emphasis would be on the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening and computing . . . . Middle schools offer opportunities for a wide range of extracurricular activities at the very time the youngsters could most benefit from them . . . .

For more on the middle school concept, see Chapter VIII.

Perkasie, Pa.: Committee Asks for Quick Action

Early in its activities, the Facilities Study Committee of the Pennridge School District, Perkasie, Pa., decided ("on the basis of both cost and the nature of the final product") not to farm out a study of the district's facilities to a private consultant firm. The group wanted to conduct the study in "a deliberative, give-and-take, developmental fashion." It was to be the product of local thinking and local talent.

Working under board guidelines, the group also decided to limit its membership. Two citizens, the municipal tax administrator, two board members, one elementary and one secondary teacher, the elementary and secondary school principals — such was the composition of the study committee.

The committee kept a brisk pace of hearings and deliberations, completing its work in less than a year. It urged a similar impetus upon the school board and the administration. After preparing its report, the study committee said, in effect: "We've gathered enough data for the board to act. Act it must . . . ." More formally, the committee said:

"This study is not presented as a blueprint for blind, uncritical adoption. It represents a point of departure for further study and then, we hope, for fast and vigorous action."

One thing that concerned the study committee was "creeping erosion of educational quality."

Educational quality is the overriding concern of the Pennridge School District, the study committee said, adding: "But erosion of quality can easily come to pass. Erosion of quality often takes place in quiet, slow but steady, and sometimes imperceptible ways. If there is not continuous concern and vigilance, a first-rate school system can slowly drift into mediocrity, and ill-considered so-called savings can be the prime contributing factor."

Urging speed in translating its study into action, the study committee told the board and the administration:

"Don't get bogged down with extended argument on items where differences of opinion exist. Differences will always exist; prolonged dwelling on them kills valuable time. Look for common ground — areas of agreement — and start there. Don't expect unanimity; it is rare. Identify priorities for action by consensus, rather than formal voting. Keep the ball rolling.

"Maintain momentum. Stay clear of time-consuming discussion on unimportant detail. Too many studies have died from sheer exhaustion emanating from tangential argument and overstated caution . . . ."

New Rochelle, N.Y.: 55-Member Committee

A grant, a consulting team, an active, widely representative citizen planning committee, a formal retreat for writing recommendations, and a slow, deliberative school board — these were the components that went into long-range planning in New Rochelle, a suburb of New York City.

At peak enrollment in 1965, the New Rochelle School District served 12,000 students in 13 schools. By 1981, enrollment had slipped to 8,500, and the

district was planning to close four elementary schools.

As far back as 1970, the New Rochelle superintendent and board noted a growing racial imbalance in the schools and a consequent isolation of minority students. By degrees also, a decrease in enrollment and the under-utilization of schools and classrooms became evident.

Advisory groups and task forces were named. They gave their reports, which recommended the closing of schools. They did not, however, name specific schools that should be closed. In addition, the superintendent and the board had difficulty in coming up with a comprehensive plan to move the district forward. One reason, possibly: the citizen advisory committees were not truly representative of all the people.

The board itself felt it had no basis for bringing about the thorough reorganization that was all but imperative as enrollments continued to drop and racial imbalance continued as a major problem. A reporter, assigned to write a story about New Rochelle in 1979, quipped: "Well, there goes another story about the 'district that can't make up its mind.'"

But Leonard Misner, who assumed the superintendency in 1980, cut a couple of Gordian knots. He applied for and got a federal grant; he searched and found a consultant to work with the district. The grant was for $81,000; it came from the Emergency School Assistance Act. The consulting team was headed by Robert Savitt, an old hand at "managing decline." As superintendent of Plainview Old Bethpage Central School District, Long Island, N.Y., Savitt bore the scars of the first phases of school closures going back to 1974.

The main goal of the new activity — with new superintendent, new consultant and new money — was to reorganize the school system, purging its schools of minority isolation. But other programs and other goals crowded upon the community and its schools. There was the strong feeling on the part of citizens for the need to preserve the neighborhood school concept; there was the imperative to reduce minority isolation throughout the district; and beyond these goals, there was the importance of providing suitable and thorough schooling for all pupils within the district. The emphasis was upon *all*. The emphasis, too, was on total reorganization of the schools.

The machinery which Misner adopted for finding a solution was a 55-member Planning Committee for School Reorganization, composed of nearly all parents, citizens, taxpayers, community leaders.

Ask the Developers

The Long-Range Planning Committee in Sheboygan, Wis., is one of many in the country which turned to developers/realtors for information about areas of the school district. Although the data provided by the Sheboygan developers/realtors were not precise, they did point to possible problems and potentials of population growth and demand for housing.

Thus, the developers were able to indicate where sewage problems existed; the nature of the soil to sustain construction; which tracts of land were likely to be used for commercial and which for residential purposes; how many new homes could reasonably be built in certain parts of the district; and, in general, population growth trends.

The lesson: Planning committees cannot overlook any sources of information about housing development in a district.

Three subcommittees were set up: for elementary school options, secondary school options and expanded neighborhood schools. The committee and subgroups drew their members from every type of neighborhood, every type of social, racial and economic stratum. "We paid particular attention to get representation from groups which were not included in previous advisory committees," Misner said.

The elementary school options subcommittee was charged with responsibility for exploring districtwide alternative schools, released-time academies, open enrollment and, "most interesting of all," in the words of one subcommittee member, magnet program overlays within existing neighborhood schools (that is, a program within a regular school that attracts children from other school neighborhoods).

The secondary school options subcommittee was charged to look into the differences between middle school and junior high schools, the grades best included in an ideal middle school, and the arguments for a grade 9-12 versus 10-12 high school.

The expanded neighborhood schools group was asked to investigate alternative arrangements for redrawing school district lines. Redistricting was considered one means of removing walls between neighborhoods and promoting racial integration.

Subcommittees met in open session. There was

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ample interaction with staff and with the consultant and his associates. Progress reports poured out to the community and to the staff through newsletters and other media. Minutes of committee and subcommittee meetings were available to the press.

After six months of intensive work, planning committee members decided they were on the verge of making recommendations. Off they went to a retreat and put their final ideas on paper. These were channeled through the superintendent to the board.

Living up to its reputation as a "slow, deliberative body," the board asked for changes — again. It got them and finally approved closing four elementary schools, merging a number of areas into "expanded neighborhoods" and changing the junior high schools into middle schools.

Satisfied with the results, Misner is especially pleased with the process — "the way we went about it." La Ruth Gray, assistant superintendent and director of the reorganization project, described the process as follows:

"The planning model brought together, in a series of open meetings, all affected parties. Even nonmembers of committees, citizens 'off the streets,' so to speak, could come and join the discussions. All were on an equal basis. It was a successful approach. It resulted in consensus.

"Remember that there were several interests in interplay: parents, the staff, the consulting team, the administration, the planning committee and its subgroups. Throughout, the school administration took the lead, but remained in constant collaboration with the consulting team and the planning committee."

Especially pleasing to New Rochelle school officials was an editorial statement in the local newspaper: "The issue of minority balances — an old taboo subject — became a cornerstone of the planning process . . . . But most commendable (was the fact) that public business was conducted in public."

Case Study: How To Survive This Phenomenal Change

Enrollment decline operates according to a well defined law. The greatest degree of decline first occurs in large cities, then it moves to suburban districts immediately surrounding them. This is what happened in the Seattle area. When enrollments in the public schools of Seattle began to decline in 1968, the same thing started to happen in the schools of the neighboring Highline Public Schools.

At its peak enrollment — 31,000 students in 1967-68 — Highline operated five senior high schools, nine junior high schools, 35 elementary schools and two special schools.

Since 1974, it has closed 13 elementary schools (one projected closing in 1981), nine junior high schools and one high school (one projected closing in 1985). In 1981, district enrollment stood at 17,000 students.

"Through all those closures," said Supt. Robert Sealey, "I have been able to retain my superindentency, and not one board member has lost his position."

How did Sealey survive "this phenomenal change in American education?" He cites these lessons for dealing with declining enrollment:

Involve the community: "This is one of the paramount factors in successfully dealing with declining enrollments," said the superintendent. Highline named its first citizen task force in 1973. It submitted recommendations to the board a year later, which suggested three lines of action:

1. To plan a process for developing understanding and gathering community suggestions. This was done through school district publications going to parents, as well as through many newspaper releases telling the story of the district's changing status. To gather the people's views, the district sponsored scores of meetings for citizens. This brought considerable feedback regarding community attitudes about declining enrollments.
2. The second line of action suggested by the task force was to establish criteria for identifying schools where change could be considered. Among the early criteria suggested were: minimum enrollment in a school that was to continue operating; age of the school; cost of modernization if the school were to continue operating; and the potential alternative use of a closed facility.
3. The third line of action was to identify, in priority order, the alternatives for use of excess classroom space. Over the years, Highline developed a form, with weightings, which set forth the factors to help decide which school was to be closed and when.

Keep it flexible: One element for a superintendent's survival during the turmoil of school closings is to keep things flexible. Sealey cites the case of one elementary school which, according to the point system, should have been the first to close. But the

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schools within a reasonable distance of the supposedly doomed school did not have the space to absorb the pupils who would have to be reassigned. "It was not possible, therefore, to close that school," Sealey said. "We didn't."

Use the best for the most: The school board decided early in the decade of school closings that the best facilities (with regard to equipment, program flexibility and size) would be utilized for the benefit of the most students. The high schools were judged to be "the best" in these regards. The closings, therefore, served to move students from elementary schools to junior high schools (the "next best") to high school facilities. This affected Highline's grade level structure. Two examples: By becoming four year institutions, high school plants were able to absorb more students. The closure of junior high schools called for the creation of two year middle schools.

The Highline experience suggests approaches and measures that can ease community tensions during closings, when the concerns of parents, students and staff are high.

Focus on alternatives: Highline citizens are in accord with the alternatives for the use of closed buildings because they helped set them up. They are, in order of priority, as follows: (1) educational use by the public schools, e.g., turning an elementary school into an alternative high school; (2) use by community and social services, e.g., as mental health centers, senior citizen centers, occupational rehabilitation programs; (3) educational use by private schools through leasing. (This approach has generated some questions in Highline, but Sealey believes it is a wise step.)

Two other uses are possible which Highline has not found necessary to apply: Renting or leasing for commercial purposes and demolition.

Recycle buildings quickly: Believing that "boarding up a school and letting it sit there" is the worst thing that could happen to a school, Highline planned its closings so that as a building was closed one day it was occupied virtually on the next by some other organization or group.

Appoint a manager of closures: A facilities planner is as important during enrollment declines as during the "golden" days of enrollment booms. Highline has identified a staff person with responsibility for school closures and for leasing and renting facilities once they have been closed. "Even in the face of declining enrollments and cutting staff, we decided to create a new position of facilities planner," Sealey said. "It was a wise decision. The people recognize that this position is crucial to district morale, attitude and support for closures."

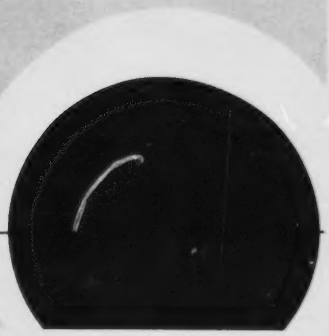
Ease the transition: From the time the board decides to close a building until it is actually closed, the Highline staff seeks to make things smooth by inviting parents to visit the schools to which their children will be assigned, by setting up joint PTA meetings between schools and by keeping students informed about the programs and teachers in the schools they will be attending. "We do all we can to make students feel welcome in their new school before they actually go there," Sealey noted.

Try open enrollment: When parents are concerned about the reassignment of their children to another school because of a closing, Highline offers them open enrollment to any elementary or middle school in the district. This alternative has been available in Highline for the past eight years. Sealey explained: "When parents state that they do not want their youngster to attend a certain school, we simply ask them to select the school they would like and to enroll their child there. This plan has ended many conversations which could have become heated." The district does not provide transportation for youngsters who attend under the open enrollment policy.

Form a pool for cooperating teachers: The pain of reducing staff because of declining enrollments has been eased somewhat in Highline through an innovative plan. Teachers who are "surplussed" and would have been subject to reduction in force are instead assigned as a "cooperating teacher" to a school of appropriate grade level. Their assignments may include substituting, covering classes for teachers at meetings, supervising student activities and other duties as assigned by the principal. Teachers are assigned to the first openings that occur in the district. "The plan has been a big winner in staff morale," Sealey said.

Chapter IV

Making Decisions; Taking Action



The citizen planning task force has completed its work. The superintendent continues it. Superintendents responding to the **Critical Issues Survey** for this report said the main values of the work of citizens in planning roles lie in tapping public opinion, in bringing to the fore the wishes of parents and the views of civic leaders, and in highlighting the community's potential fears about the fate of their schools.

When the final report of the citizen group is on the superintendent's desk, weeks and months of work loom ahead. This may consist of refining and updating facts and of bringing into consideration new conditions developing in the district. Most often the administration's follow-up will consist of sifting out the points requiring decisions and the points requiring action.

Whether a school district is in the first phase of enrollment decline ("We're just beginning to feel its impact . . .") or in a later phase (Tulsa Supt. Larry Zenke said he's in the sixth phase), superintendent and board must prepare for the moment when a board member says, "Mr. Chairman, I move that School A (and/or B, C . . .), having been declared surplus after study, shall be closed in accordance with procedures to be prepared by the superintendent and approved by the board."

Before that motion comes — possibly months before — the administration must (1) review the policies of the district which may have a bearing on the school closure and (2) approve the criteria for judging which school or schools are to be closed, and when.

In turn, these actions will be based on others: (1) reviewing and updating student enrollment projections, (2) making the basic decisions about the size of schools and (3) keeping open the channels of information and communication between the people and the schools.

Tuning Up Board Policies

In a time of turbulence and change, it is prudent for school district officials to use board policies as guides to action and also as protective armor against the possible consequences of some of their actions, such as adverse public opinion or legal onslaughts.

So diffuse is the effect of declining enrollment on school governance that 25 individual policy statements may be needed. A board should check its policy manual for these statements and make sure they are revised and up to date. The topics are:

Goals and Objectives. Old, formalistic statements may not be much help when concerned (and irate) citizens ask, "What are we trying to achieve?" or "What are the schools for, anyway?"

Community Involvement in Decision Making. Does board policy provide for the means for citizen involvement? Are citizens aware of the board's attitude toward their participation?

Staff Involvement in Decision Making. Does the policy set forth the opportunities and the limits of staff participation in helping the board reach decisions?

Student Involvement in Decision Making. Is the board serious about that? Does the policy make clear the benefits of student involvement to the schools and to the students?

Attendance Areas; Districting; Assignments of Students to Schools. Policy statements on these three topics are crucial in periods of enrollment decline. It is important to review these policies to make certain the board has the authority to establish new attendance areas, abolish others, change district boundary lines and provide for the transfer of students outside of the regular attendance zones.

Grade Organization; Organization of Instruction. If changes in the grade patterns of the district are planned due to enrollment decline, board members should reread policy statements on these topics. Do they need revision?

Class Size. Is board policy consistent with the negotiated agreements? Does it give the district flexibility with regard to the size of classes?

Public Participation at Board Meetings. The fate of a school closure may at times be decided at a board meeting in which the public takes part. Are board policies clear on the nature and limits of the public's participation at regular board meetings?

Advisory Committees to the Board; Citizen Planning Committees. These agencies of the public can be useful to the board of education provided they are guided by policy and administrative regulations.

Paid Consultants. What does the board policy say about the use of paid consultants? Do the provisions meet the needs of the times?

Reduction in Force; Tenure of Certified Teachers; Transfer and Reassignment of Teachers; Certified Staff Seniority; Evaluation of Certified Teachers; Early Retirement of Teachers. Check into the board policy manual. Can individual statements on these topics be retrieved? What is the date of the latest revision of each? (Aspects of these topics are discussed in Chapter VII.)

Retirement of Facilities; Leasing; Joint Leasing; Surplus Property. This Chapter and Chapter VI deal with these issues.

Types of Funds. Is it clear and certain into which funds to deposit money received as a result of sale, rent or leasing of school plants?

Policies on Retirement of Facilities

Policies on retirement of facilities are relatively new entries in school board policy manuals. In fact, more than 70 percent of the respondents to the survey for this report said they do not have policies on what to do about surplus space. Such policies are apt to be developed under the spur of circumstances; often, no policy emerges until after the board has acted.

The survey for this report, however, brought out a variety of policy statements dealing with the necessity to close schools. Some are short and state only which philosophic principles are to govern when drops in enrollments become evident. Others are long, spelling out procedures to be followed in preparation for board decisions. The large majority of policies include the criteria to be applied when the board is preparing to take a "Yes" or "No" vote on the closing of a single school or of several at once.

Consider, for example, the short "Model Policy" suggested to local school boards by the Oregon Department of Education. The entire text, which school boards are free to adapt, reads:

> The intent of the school board is to operate existing school buildings in a prudent and fiscally sound manner. It subscribes to the concept of the community school and will maintain schools of the district as near to student population as possible.
>
> The board may find that population shifts and building obsolescence require consideration for the closure of one or more existing district buildings. It will seek input from citizens prior to reaching such a decision.
>
> The superintendent is delegated the responsibility of recommending to the board those factors which should be considered for possible school closures and the processes to be followed. The administration shall keep the board informed of situations in the district which may lead to possible building closures.

Policy on Clusters for Consolidation

Consider the following multifaceted policy from the Fairfax County (Va.) School Board. It is worth close study. The text of the policy follows:

Analyses of demographic factors, forecasts and projections of student membership and school capacities, and studies of operating cost per student shall be made at least annually on a regular basis for all Fairfax County schools.

The superintendent shall recommend to the school board annually clusters of schools which appear to justify further analysis in the form of consolidation studies. The school board shall consider an elementary school consolidation study when any one of the following conditions applies: (1) A school's enrollment falls below that level which justifies two full-ratio teaching stations for grades 1-6, and is projected to remain below that level for five years if no boundary adjustments are made. (2) The operating cost per student at a school has substantially exceeded the countywide average for

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elementary schools for a three-year period and is budgeted to exceed that average in the current year. (3) A school is a candidate for major renovation.

An elementary school which meets any one of these criteria shall be grouped with a cluster of nearby schools for the consolidation study. Following approval by the school board of the school consolidation study and the composition of the cluster of schools to be included in the study, a community advisory committee composed of representatives from affected schools and communities shall be formed.

The following information about each school in the cluster shall be released at the time the cluster is identified, or as soon thereafter as possible:

1. A five-year enrollment and a five-year capacity history.
2. A five-year projection of enrollment and capacity.
3. Description of instructional program and staffing (current and projected).
4. Community activities using school and/or site.
5. Description of the physical plant (including floor plan).
6. Renewal history, renewal needs and cost estimates.
7. Comparative student aptitude and achievement data.
8. All special education and other extended instructional uses of the school.
9. Community profile, including demographic and zoning information.
10. Transportation pattern of students.
11. Environmental conditions which might affect the school.
12. Direct operating cost per student.
13. Capital cost per student.

The following criteria, listed alphabetically, shall be applied on a broad judgmental basis (with no single criterion predominating) to all schools within the study cluster:

- Alternative use of school facilities.
- Building design and site adequacy.
- Community.
- Cost.
- Enrollment.
- Physical facilities.
- Quality of education.
- Student and staff displacement.
- Transportation.

Policy on Retirement of Facilities

From a considerably smaller county school system, Transylvania County Schools, Brevard, N.C., comes this policy on retirement of facilities:

The Transylvania County Board of Education will give consideration to closing schools when a decline in student membership reaches a point when the continued operation of all buildings will have a detrimental effect on the county's educational program and business support services. Factors to be considered when determining which school or schools will be closed include the following:

Student membership capacity: The school board will have reason for serious concern when student membership for a group of schools in a geographic area has been substantially under capacity for a two year period and is projected to remain so. ("Substantially under capacity" is the difference between program capacity and student membership to the extent that students in that grouping could be housed in one school less.)

Student displacement: Consideration will be given to the severity of both positive and negative effects and to the number of students involved should a school be closed.

Staff displacement: This will include consideration of unique programs and special skills and relocation opportunities for the staff members of any affected school.

Educational program: Every effort will be made to ensure that the closing of a school will not adversely affect the educational program on any level in the Transylvania County Schools.

Community use of schools. Consideration will be given to the accessibility and degree of use by the community.

Energy: The availability of practical energy sources and the need for conservation will be considered.

Safety: Compliance with building codes, OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) and handicapped requirements are to be considered. Age and characteristics of building material and equipment, condition of electrical wiring and fire safety are important features.

Physical condition of building: Age, future usefulness, needed improvements and maintenance requirements are factors to be reviewed.

Maintenance and plant operation: Expenditures will be determined as they relate to utilities, building repairs, food services and maintenance services.

Transportation: Cost, safety and time factors will be reviewed as they relate to pupil reassignment.

Personnel: Cost factors relating to administrative and instructional staff will be determined.

Policy No. 1. on School Closing

Emphasis on procedural steps is the main characteristic of this policy on retiring facilities adopted in 1980 by the Hagerstown (Md.) Board of Education:

Steps to be taken in considering the closing of a school or schools are as follows (the words "school" or "schools" mean all school property, including undeveloped land):

1. Establish advantages and disadvantages of closing a school (based on) program for students; impact on other related schools; impact on special courses or programs; effect on special, federal or state funding; and effect on articulation.

Do It; Don't Drag It Out

I believe that the best way to close schools is not to drag out the process. Get your facts in order, make the announcement, have a brief time for public questioning; and then do it. Of course, your board of education must be prepared to stand fast in the face of pressure. So it is important that you have your homework done before the announcement is made. This includes making sure that you have fully considered as many questions as possible and have developed reasonable answers.

— Damon Asbury, Executive Assistant, Columbus (Ohio) Public Schools.

2. Consider the demographic profile of the area (include area development plans) and determine the permanency of the decision by considering the maturity of the neighborhood, trends in private schools in the area, birth rate changes and potential changes in population.

3. Prepare enrollment projections for affected schools.

4. Review all fiscal considerations: possible bonded indebtedness and impact on school system expenditures (staff, maintenance and operations, and transportation costs).

5. Determine whether a school closing will require physical modifications to other affected schools.

6. Determine the relationship of affected facilities to the needs of the physically handicapped.

7. Determine any changes in student transportation travel time.

8. Consider the accessibility and degree of use by the community for educational or cultural purposes.

Notification and Procedural Steps

When a school is considered for future closing, the school staff and community shall be notified. In addition, affected schools and their communities shall be notified of such consideration.

Members of the administration shall be available to meet with members of the affected school's staff and community to explain why such a study is under way.

After notification and opportunity for such meetings, the superintendent shall make a recommendation regarding closing after September enrollments have been analyzed, but before February 1 of that school year.

Before making a decision to close a school effective at the end of the school year, the board shall provide for a public hearing for the affected community prior to April 15 of that school year.

This policy and its accompanying procedures do not apply to necessary emergency closings on a temporary basis for reasons of health and/or safety.

Policy No. 2 on School Closing

Some 49 schools had been closed in Columbus, Ohio, before the board adopted a policy on school closings. When Supt. Joseph Davis offered a policy for board adoption in March 1981, he said: "This policy draws heavily on the methods we have used in the past to

determine which buildings to close. We have translated past procedures into policy language."

The text follows:

When the enrollment in the district results in unused capacity, school buildings shall be selected for closing.

Schools located in contiguous attendance areas with sufficient capacity to accommodate the enrollment when one or more of the schools is closed shall be identified. In determining which school or schools shall be closed, the following factors shall be considered:

1. *Educational program* (i.e., accommodation of the planned educational program in the schools remaining open).

2. *Capacity* (i.e., space for the efficient and effective organization of the total enrollment).

3. *Safety and access* (e.g., student safety and ease of access to the building; distance, time and cost of transporting students).

4. *Relocation* (i.e., number of students whose school assignment will be changed).

5. *Burden* (i.e., equitable sharing by students throughout the district of the effects of school closings).

6. *Racial balance* (i.e., impact on naturally integrated attendance areas and racial balance in the schools).

7. *Accessibility for the handicapped* (i.e., present or potential capability of the building to accommodate handicapped persons).

8. *Age and condition* (e.g., operation and maintenance costs, energy consumption and costs, age and condition of the building).

9. *Future use* (e.g., conversion to another use, sale or use as an alternative school).

10. *Circumstances* (i.e., unique situations within the school or district).

Since conditions may not permit giving equal weight to all factors, decisions shall be based on overall sensibility and objectivity.

The report to the board on the closing of specific schools shall include the factors used in the selection process. A statement of rationale for each school affected by the closing of a specific school shall be included in the report and made available to parents and the community.

Putting the Components Together

As the policies cited above suggest, board statements on school closure (or retirement of facilities) are loosely structured and varied in content, and they stress different aspects of the problem.

A comprehensive, structured policy on retirement of facilities would include at least four basic components, as illustrated in a statement adopted by the Baltimore County Board of Education, Towson, Md. The components are:

Underlying principle: When and why the board will act on school closure.

Process of community involvement: When and under what conditions will the board name citizen study, advisory or planning committees; what are their charges and limitations.

Factors or criteria: What facts and concepts about a building, or groups of buildings, will the board require to determine which plants are to be candidates for closures; how is the board to evaluate the facts.

Timetables: What are the time constraints upon staff, citizen committees, the superintendent and the board itself in completing study, making recommendations and reaching a final decision.

Factors in Making Decisions

Responses to the survey for this report show that no district will move toward a decision to close or keep open a school without some consideration of the factors involved and the possible consequences of such actions. Setting up criteria or factors, therefore, is a "must" and usually a "first" in considering school closings.

From the scores of statements of criteria submitted by respondents to the survey, these characteristics emerge:

They may be developed by citizen planning groups . . . by committees of staff members . . . by technical staffs working under the superintendent's direction . . . by consultants.

They are often included as board policy . . . and just as often used as technical papers to guide a board's discussions.

They may be weighted or unweighted, that is, each criterion may be given a rank or a measure of importance or such measures may not be assigned. Scoring the criteria may range from a simple "Yes" or "No" or a plus or minus, placed against each criterion, to a complicated method of computation. Where scores are assigned for every criterion, some

administrators prefer that a high score should favor keeping the school open, but the reverse of this type of scoring is also common: a high score on the criterion moves the school toward becoming a candidate for closure.

Why Establish Criteria?

Broadly conceived, criteria are designed to give the school board answers to three questions?

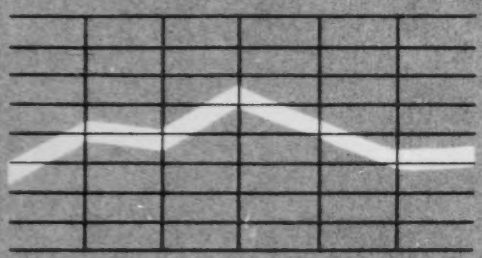
1. What effect will the closing of a school (or its continued maintenance under conditions of declining enrollment) have on the education of students, including effect on teachers, programs and school services?

2. What effect will proposed board action have on the community, especially the immediate neighborhoods?

3. What will be the economic or financial result of the way in which each school building would be disposed?

Each of these questions divides and subdivides, as boards in communities across the nation devise or adopt criteria for evaluating the effect of school closures. Some districts use no more than 10 or 12

What Research Says



Making Enrollment Projections More Accurate

How accurate is accurate?

When your enrollment projections turn out to be 98 percent accurate, you are "successful."

When accuracy is between 96 and 98 percent, you are "intermediate."

When accuracy falls below 96 percent, call it "poor."

Such are the three levels of accuracy suggested by two researchers who studied the enrollment forecasting procedures in 42 unified school districts in Los Angeles County. The investigators, Joyce King-Stoops, University of Southern California, and Robert M. Slaby, principal of Carson City (Nev.) High School, were especially interested in how to make forecasting techniques successful. During the course of their study they also dealt with other questions, to come up with such findings as these:

- Smaller school districts had a better prediction accuracy than medium-size or large districts.
- Prediction accuracy ranged from a high of 99.7 percent to a low of 86.6 percent.
- Districts whose student enrollments changed 4 percent or more over a three-year period attained a prediction accuracy of only 95.8 percent. Districts whose enrollments changed less than 4 percent in the same period had a prediction accuracy of 98 percent.

The main question, how to achieve greater prediction accuracy, was answered in the following ways:

1. The most commonly used forecasting method was the cohort-survival technique. (See explanation in this chapter.)

2. To ensure greater accuracy, the cohort-survival technique should be supplemented by additional facts about each neighborhood and the community. Present housing patterns, plans for future housing developments, local and statewide birth rates, age of residents, family mobility and ethnic composition of the population are among the ingredients of the second enrollment forecasting method.

3. The cohort-survival method should be used in the central office for districtwide projection figures. The second method should be used by principals in ascertaining the situation in each neighborhood.

4. A district-level official should review both the cohort-survival figures and the estimates of building principals before developing the final enrollment estimates.

sets of criteria. Others develop lists which run well into a score or more items.

The Hamden, Conn., schools developed a system of criteria for evaluating elementary school buildings which has proved successful for that district.

The main questions from the Hamden schools are reproduced below, along with the kinds of data that will answer the questions:

Educational criteria — to help the board evaluate the district's elementary school buildings as educational plants:

1. How appropriate for an elementary school are the site's location and the site itself. Considerations: traffic pattern, air quality, zoning category of surrounding area (whether residential, business, industrial, mixed).

2. Does the building's classroom space accommodate easily various educational activities? Considerations: accommodations for different size groups; renovation necessary to make space flexible.

3. How many square feet of classroom space would the building have for each pupil at capacity enrollment and as projected for the future?

4. How well do the building's auxiliary facilities support the educational program? Considerations: adequacy of space for media center, art room, music room, gymnasium, playground.

5. What percentage of the building's enrollment can be lost before the building becomes educationally unfeasible?

6. How well could the building continue to operate its educational program while another community service operated in the building at the same time? Consideration: suitability for dual (or joint) use.

Community impact criteria — to help identify the relationship of an elementary school to its surrounding neighborhood:

1. How many children who currently attend the school, and what percentage of the school's population, live within walking distance?

2. How is the school related to its surrounding population? Considerations: "sense of neighborhood," use of school as polling place, extent of PTA activity, use of school for community programs and activities.

3. How homogeneous or diverse is the population living in the area around the building? A question for board discussion is whether homogeneity or diversity would best serve the interests of the children.

4. Do feasible alternate uses exist for the building at present? Considerations: services benefiting the community, enterprise (public or private) that would serve community needs.

Financial criteria — to help the board determine what the net financial effect would be of closing the school:

1. What would be the projected cost per pupil of operating the school?

2. What would be the cost of making necessary renovations to bring the school up to a standard desired by the people and the board?

3. Would the probable disposal of the building, after its closing, result in a financial gain or loss for the district?

Note on scoring criteria: Hamden school officials decided that a high score would favor keeping the school open. An instrument for scoring each school was devised by a criteria committee, part of Hamden's Task Force on Declining Enrollment. The weighting of the three categories was as follows: educational (40 percent), community impact (40 percent), financial (20 percent).

For information on how Hamden scored its schools, and a sample worksheet for scoring (as long as supply lasts), write to Superintendent of Schools, 1450 Whitney Ave., Hamden, Conn. 06514.

Enrollment Projections

As school board members and administrators begin considering the fate of each school building, they must have not only the data to answer the items of the criteria but also the facts about future student population. The art of student projections comes in here. And regardless of the state of that art at present (it is far from perfect), the consensus among school administrators is, "Project we must."

"Enrollment projections constitute the most essential data for school district planning," said Supt. William E. Keim, Pennridge, Pa. "They are prime indicators of future demands for educational services, programs, staff, facilities and financial resources."

Keim and his staff developed a set of basic concepts regarding projections:

- **National and state demographic data are worth study.** But it is the local district data that are crucial and which will help a district arrive at the hard decisions it must make.

- **Five-year enrollment projections strike the best balance between reliability of data and lead time for future elementary school planning.** Projections that extend beyond five years call for estimating future births which, to say the least, is a highly conjectural undertaking, especially when applied to a small, local geographic area. Ten-year forecasts are generally quite reliable for secondary school projections

Resolution For Five Year Plan

Moment for Action

Motions and resolutions which superintendents prepare for board actions vary in style and in content. "When you reach the moment of truth, it's best to be on the formalistic side," said an Ohio school administrator who has closed nine schools. The text of the following resolution for a five year plan, while on the formal side, effectively tells the board what and why. It was presented by Supt. Charles F. Wilson, Allentown, Pa.

The superintendent and central staff recommend approval of the following resolution:

Whereas, the Allentown School District is committed to offer its citizens the best and broadest education possible within realistic budgetary limits; and

Whereas, the district believes that this objective can best be achieved by allocating an increasingly greater percentage of its financial resources to education programs than to building operation and maintenance; and

Whereas, energy costs have increased at a much faster rate since 1973 than other costs; and

Whereas, the enrollment in the Allentown School District has declined by approximately 13 percent since 1970; and

Whereas, the enrollment decline is projected to continue into the foreseeable future; and

Whereas, the Allentown School District needs fewer schools to accommodate the present and projected educational programs in the district; and

Whereas, a continually declining rate of growth in district real estate values is placing an increasingly heavy tax burden on Allentown School District property owners; and

Whereas, a period of five years is necessary to implement proper and effective school closings, grade level reorganization, building construction and renovation; now therefore be it

Resolved that the Board of Directors of the School District of the City of Allentown hereby adopts the following plan for more effective use of district schools. . . .

Note: The plan provided for reorganization of grade levels; the names of the schools to be closed; schools to be razed and new construction on same site; and renovations to be completed, all by 1982.

since the individual bodies are already here (from the preschool age of 1 to grade 6 — a 12-year span), and they are countable.

• Forecasting is more art than science. Projecting future enrollments represents a venture into the uncertain and unknown. Therefore, forecasts can never be fixed or totally reliable. At best, they represent a well documented, educated guesstimate. Predicting at what rate human beings will reproduce, especially beyond the short range, is "iffy" business.

• Current and future enrollments are directly affected, in varying degrees, by a wide variety of variables — local, regional, national and international — that can and sometimes do change from day to day. Predicting the impact of each of these variables at any given time and place is at the heart of the projection exercise.

• The preschool census is of central importance. Enrollments in most grades — from 2 to 12 — generally follow a more or less predictable pattern in any given school district. However, to forecast reasonably precise kindergarten and first grade enrollments (which are most critical for planning) requires accurate basic preschool census data. Enrollment projections of any sort can be no better than such data.

More than one projection should be developed. By averaging out these projections, a final planning projection can be obtained which would approach a great degree of accuracy.

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Among the projections which school district officials can make are (1) retention ratio or cohort survival (2) the Engelhardt projection and (3) new housing projection. However, most superintendents find the retention ratio or the cohort survival technique quite adequate; it is the most frequently used today. Specialists in projections recommend it for school district planning because it involves the fewest variables and is therefore subject to least controversy.

(**Note:** Variables can be attacked, criticized and dragged into controversy about future school enrollments. Why? In projecting population and student enrollment, experts seek to include such factors as fertility rates; amount, type and size of new housing; interest rates on housing; availability of mortgage money; family mobility; changes in life styles and values. Obviously, such variables are not only quicksilvered, but they are subject to many kinds of interpretation.)

A good point to keep in mind:

"Projections are not predictions. They are estimates of what would happen if the assumptions embedded in the projection factors are realized in the future."

— Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, Boulder, Colo.

The cohort survival technique is based on historical data, so who can argue about those? The method is based on the concept that most children, each year, progress from their present grade to a higher one. Some, of course, leave the public school (i.e., they move out of the area, enroll in private institutions, drop out); some are not capable of progressing to the next grade; a few may be accelerated a grade; and some may move or transfer into district schools. A retention ratio reflects the relationship between the number of children in one grade level in a certain year and the number of children in the next higher grade the following year.

To round out this discussion on projections, a score of superintendents were asked three questions: Is the cohort survival method reliable as far as you are concerned? Have you found it useful? Can it be applied by district staff members, or does it require special consultants or demographers?

The reply from Supt. John Pagan of the Waterford (Mich.) School District was typical, and added facts not given by other respondents:

"On a district basis, we found the cohort survival method of projecting student enrollments both reliable and useful. We have used the method for approximately seven years. Our research and evaluation staff have always been within one percent of total enrollments for the district.

"The precision with which this method can be applied decreases as the size of the geographical area and the number of students decreases. For example: The total school district enrollment can be predicted with greater precision than can enrollments for one school attendance area within the district. This, of course, is true with most projection techniques used by demographers.

"The cohort survival method can be used by district staff and does not necessarily require the expertise of special consultants or demographers. It is, however, quite a tedious task if many projections are to be made. The Waterford School District's research and evaluation office has developed a computer application program to do the calculations."

Large or Small Schools?

One of the questions that intrigue some school district officials as they consider school closing and school consolidation is this: How big or little should a school be to insure the best opportunities for learning at the elementary and secondary levels?

The question has occupied the attention of researchers and administrators. Officials in Dayton, Ohio, typical of many who have searched for the answer, concluded from a review of research and practice that "almost any size school enrollment can be shown to be the best size" under a variety of conditions.

Looking closely at 10 years of research, Dayton officials decided that size is not necessarily a factor in determining optimum characteristics of a good school for learning. Schools within schools and other special school organizations can make a large school of any size — elementary or secondary — an ideal place for learning. For example, the largest of Dayton's high schools consistently has the best attendance rate (95 to 97 percent) in the city.

On the other hand, individualized and independent study programs can make nearly any small school — elementary or secondary — a splendid (if perhaps more costly) learning opportunity. Dayton can also provide an example of a small high school with a consistently high attendance rate.

A report by the Johns Hopkins Center for Social Organization, based on 1977 data collected for the National Institute for Education, supports a philosophy of smaller schools (900-1,200 students for high schools). The report, *Disruption in 600 Schools*, says smaller schools tend to have higher rates of attendance and lower levels of violence; staff can more easily enforce rules; cooperation can more easily be established among teachers, students and administration; there tends to be less teacher and student victimization; and good parent-school relationships can more easily be established.

A telephone survey of a small random sample of Dayton school administrators confirms their agreement with the Johns Hopkins philosophy. Administrators were asked, "In your opinion, based on your years of experience as a public school administrator, what do you think is the best size for a school?" The answers from six elementary school staff ranged from 300 to 600 students for elementary schools; the answers from six high school administrators ranged from 800 to 1,200 students for high schools.

Madison Sets Criteria For Elementary School Size

School size was studied carefully by Madison, Wis., school officials to help the board reach decisions on which schools to close. Supt. Douglas S. Ritchie reported that "research results do not give much guidance," but that the following conclusions are worth considering:

1. Staff interaction has some advantages in smaller schools. There would probably be more contact among staff members and more familiarity. However, as time goes on, this very familiarity could prove to be a disadvantage. In the larger school, there would be a greater variety of different types of people. These people would bring different skills and expertise to content areas.

2. Individual attention to students and parents has been cited as an advantage for smaller schools. Others agree that individual attention is not unique to smaller schools but rather the result of how well teachers and administrators individualize their instructional program and create a warm and friendly learning environment.

3. The larger school creates more options for grouping children. A large number of teachers at any grade level allows more flexibility in matching the learning style of the child with the teaching style of the teacher. Where there is only one or two teachers per grade level in a school, this option is limited. The larger school would also assure a full program of extracurricular activities. Small schools might not have the minimum number of students needed for orchestras, drama clubs or after-school sports.

4. Smaller schools provide a better environment for discipline. In large schools where teachers and the principal do not know individual students, discipline can become a serious problem.

5. Continuity in curriculum is important for large and small schools. When a school has two or fewer classes per grade level, the ability of the staff to be members of the various curriculum committees is affected. A larger staff provides more assurance that curriculum continuity can take place.

6. A certain adequacy of support for curriculum (e.g., audiovisual equipment and various learning kits) is needed. A certain minimum number of students is needed to support these costs. Buying a 16mm film projector in a small school requires a greater percentage of the instructional budget than the same purchase in a large school.

7. Finally, it is more difficult to provide a balanced and diversified staff in a small school as compared to a larger one.

In summary then, several criteria can be identified as to how large or small a school should be.

An elementary school should be large enough to provide for:

- Full-time services for students with special learning needs, as well as full-time art, music and physical education personnel.
- An adequate supply of educational kits and audiovisual equipment.
- Parental choice among two or three teachers for each student.
- Enough staff so that several areas of expertise are represented.

A school should be small enough so that:

- The principal and teachers know the names of different students and are able to create a more natural setting for discipline.
- Staff members will know one another.
- Students will know one another.
- Parents feel that they can influence the school program.

These criteria, in effect, call for a K-5 school of about 450-600 students for Madison.

Case Study The Superintendent Was Jeered; Now He's Cheered

"He's been cursed. Called a liar. Booed. Threatened."

The above words made up the lead to a newspaper

article in the *Tulsa World*, and they referred to Larry Lynn Zenke, Tulsa's young, energetic school superintendent. Date: March 15, 1979 — a low point in the tenure of this school executive.

Reasons for the public displeasure were several, but the major one was Zenke's mode of operation in seeking to close elementary schools in the district. Logic, facts and professional integrity were on Zenke's side. Enrollment in Tulsa was dropping sharply. From a peak of 80,000 students in 105 schools in 1968, enrollment plunged to 49,000 students in 94 schools in 1980-81.

Decreasing the number of schools to match the decreased student enrollment, however, was not easy.

Here's what happened: Zenke felt that to save money, to preserve educational programs, to avoid even more serious future problems, schools had to be closed. He set in motion a School Facilities Study (1977) which documented excessive per-student costs and the restricted programs offered in schools with shrinking enrollments.

Armed with charts and statistics, Zenke and his staff began to convince the school board and the community of the need to close at least two schools. Few were impressed; many were angered. After bitter debates within and outside the board room, one school was closed.

Having learned that staff studies do not impress the public, Zenke was instrumental in 1978 in setting up a Task Force on Declining Enrollments composed of 48 citizens. After nine months of study, this group made several recommendations. The main one was as follows: "That the grade structure should be reorganized, with elementary schools to serve grades K-5, junior high schools to become middle schools serving grades 6-8, and senior high schools to become four year institutions, for grades 9-12."

Although Zenke had misgivings about this plan ("It was frankly recognized that this proposal was a move to save all the high schools and let the elementary and junior high schools bear the brunt of school closings. . . ."), he recommended to the board that ninth graders begin moving to the senior high schools. The public rose in protest. Zenke withdrew his recommendations.

Life was becoming complicated for Zenke. New controversy about a proposed high school closing (late 1978); pressure from the Justice Department for further desegregation; grumblings from the black community; tangles with the board and with teacher power groups — these were among the factors that culminated in parental ire, diminished confidence in Zenke, and public opposition, often in threatening terms, to his plans and proposals.

What did the public want? Looking back, Zenke said, it was evident that the people wanted a districtwide plan for reorganization and school closings in which they had a firsthand role. In 1979 they got both. Zenke's fortunes began to rise.

"Since it had become abundantly clear that the community wanted to be involved, and was going to be involved, one way or another," Zenke said, "we devised a plan to structure this involvement in a productive and positive way."

Called the Master Plan for School Consolidations, it included many of the suggestions which citizens and community leaders had made during stormy hearings held prior to the plan's adoption in September 1979.

The master plan established criteria to be used in selecting schools for closings. It specified timelines for closings and consolidation. It called for more adequate advance notice to parents about school consolidations so they could plan their children's educational futures. Most important, the master plan provided for direct, intense involvement of

Getting Help on Student Enrollment Projections

✔ **The New England School Development Council provides enrollment forecasting services — free to members, $395 to nonmembers. Contact John R. Sullivan Jr., Executive Director, New England School Development Council, 85 Speen St., Framingham, Mass. 01701.**

✔ **The Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education has developed techniques for projecting high school graduates. Write WICHE, P.O. Drawer P, Boulder, Colo. 80302.**

✔ **Investigators around the country are at work refining methods on enrollment projections. One who has carried his work almost to completion is Edward P. Caffarella, Associate Professor, College of Education, University of Maine, Orono, Me. 04469. Caffarella's presentation of this topic at the 1981 AASA annual convention in Atlanta was well received by superintendents.**

parents and community groups in planning the future of Tulsa's schools.

The guidelines of the master plan set up by Zenke and the board called for:

1. A School Planning Council in each building, composed of PTA officers, parents, teachers and principals.

2. Nine Area Planning Councils, each encompassing one senior high school and its feeder elementary and junior high schools. In addition to parents, teachers and principals, each area council includes members at large from business and civic groups. The area council is the key group in planning; it prepares and sends to the superintendent ideas about school closings and consolidations.

3. A coordinating agency for the work of area councils, which is actually Tulsa's City Council of the PTA. Tulsa district officials believe that the PTA is the best agency for soliciting and sifting ideas for school consolidation planning.

The council concept and approach are successful. As council after council — whether at building or area levels — made recommendations which Zenke and the board put into effect, the people said, "We did it ourselves."

Zenke made these observations about his experiences: "When I recommended a quality solution to declining enrollments, the community wouldn't accept it. Through the planning council process of our master plan, we have added acceptance to quality."

The *Tulsa World* agrees, as shown by a news story dated Feb. 4, 1981, and bearing the headline: "Why Larry Zenke Smiles So Much: Happy Days Are Here Again for Tulsa's Schools."

For a copy of Tulsa's master plan, write Larry Zenke, Superintendent, Tulsa Public Schools, P.O. Box 45208, Tulsa, Okla. 74145.

Case Study

Madison, Wis.: Simulated School Closings

The Board of Education for the Madison Metropolitan School District has used the technique of simulated school closings in efforts to decide which of its elementary and middle schools should be closed.

Simulations do not provide all the answers; nor are their outcomes final or binding on the board. They are useful, however, in dramatizing "this is what would happen" if the board closed School A or School B.

The schools chosen for simulation are the end result of a ranking process used to determine which schools have the greatest potential for closing. Much work precedes the simulation exercise, and the board must be presented with a variety of data.

Working through a simulated closing: Following is a simulated closing of a typical Madison school (the names of the schools have been changed, some designations altered and the facts somewhat simplified). The basic assumptions are as follows:

1. That Herman Elementary School would be closed starting with the 1980-81 school year.

2. That Herman Middle School would be closed in 1980-81.

3. That Herman Elementary students would attend either Lake Shore or Russell Elementary Schools.

4. That Schlimgen and MacPherson Streets would serve as the boundary line between Lake Shore and Russell Schools.

5. That the High School Work and Learning Center would have to be placed in another facility.

Next, the board considered a set of facts on enrollment capacity of the schools to which students were to be assigned:

The 1980-81 projected student enrollment at Herman Elementary School is 166 students. Were Herman to be closed in 1980-81, the students would be distributed to Lake Shore and Russell Schools. The north/south boundary line between the two schools would be Highway 103. All students north of that line would attend Lake Shore, and all students south of the line would attend Russell.

The 1980-81 projected enrollment for Lake Shore School is 290 students. The new boundary, as defined, would place approximately 116 former Herman students in Lake Shore. This would increase the 1980-81 projected enrollment at Lake Shore to 406 students, which the school can easily accommodate.

The 1980-81 projected enrollment for Russell School is 352 students. Approximately 50 former Herman students would attend Russell in 1980-81. This would increase the 1980-81 projected enrollment at Russell to 402 students, which the school can easily accommodate.

The next step was to consider the economic impact of the closings.

Closing Herman Elementary School, the board learned, would result in the following savings:

$ 26,000	— principal
15,000	— librarian
12,300	— clerical
1,720	— part-time teacher aide
28,000	— custodial
$ 83,020	

This simulated closing revealed two major facts:

1. The closing of Herman Elementary School will not increase the projected student enrollments at Lake Shore and Russell Schools beyond their capacities.
2. The potential savings resulting from closing Herman Elementary School would be about $83,000.

Why are potential teacher reductions not considered in the simulation's economic impact? While closing schools results in potential savings of teacher salaries, Madison officials believe that the exact impact of teacher reductions can be determined only after actual enrollments are established in September following the closing of a school.

In addition, no assumptions are made relating to bus routes or the disposition of closed school buildings. These factors are taken up in due time, when the board is ready for its final action.

Case Study

East Ramapo: Redistricting

At peak enrollment, the East Ramapo Central School District, Spring Valley, N.Y., housed 9,700 students in 15 elementary schools. In 1980-81, the district had 12 elementary schools, with 5,950 students. It also was maintaining three junior high schools and two senior high schools. While enrollment in the secondary schools also was declining, the rate had not yet reached the point where closings were necessary.

In a communication to the community, Supt. Jack R. Anderson noted that despite a decline of elementary students and school closings, there had not been a total redistricting since 1968. This, he said, had resulted in an imbalance of student population among the schools. "While the enrollment in most schools is below a sound educationally rated capacity, and some have empty classrooms, other schools are above their rated capacity."

By early 1980, Anderson said, "we reached the point where the board wanted to undertake a redistribution of students."

Intensive study preceded the first moves toward redistricting. A Citizen Advisory Committee worked for approximately two years on the challenge; staff studies and studies by outside consultants kept the data on enrollment projections fresh and under constant validation.

An incident that taught a lesson: East Ramapo learned the need for alertness to population trends as well as continual assessment of data from an incident which occurred while redistricting was under consideration. Several members of the community insisted that a large number of new homes were being built for families with school-age children. They contended that, as a result, the district would not experience decline, but would probably see an increase. Studies by independent consultants were needed to prove that the new housing starts would have little effect on the decline of elementary students. Redistricting plans continued.

Guidelines and benefits: The success of redistricting plans hinged on two factors. One was the development of guidelines which the board could accept and which were in line with school board goals; the other was the development of a statement of benefits which the community could value.

The redistricting guidelines are as follows:

1. Priority will be given to maintaining the neighborhood school. Students who presently walk to their assigned school should not be bused out of their neighborhood to provide room for children to be bused in.
2. Children entitled to transportation should not have to ride a bus for an unreasonable length of time.
3. Orientation programs should be provided for parents, students and staff who are affected by the redistricting.
4. When children are relocated, school building enrollment should be as evenly distributed as possible and should reflect the capacity of the building.
5. Every student entering the final grade in a building should have the option of remaining in that building to conclude that grade.
6. If possible, no student entering the 11th grade in September 1980 should have a change of school assignment.
7. The district will strive to achieve a racial-ethnic and socioeconomic balance in its schools.
8. Self-contained special education classes should be distributed equally among schools, where

facilities and programming permit.

9. To the extent possible, the entire student body of an elementary school should be assigned to the same junior high school.

10. Where possible, attendance lines should be at major intersections and other similar boundaries. Divisions of blocks will be avoided.

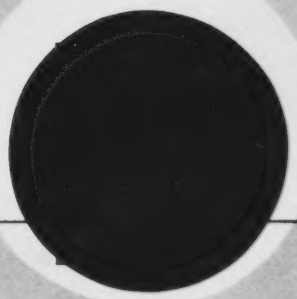
11. Buildings should be accessible to students and adults who are handicapped.

The district summarized the benefits of enrollment decline as follows:

- School population would be better balanced at all levels, insuring greater educational opportunities for all.
- Class size would be reduced at the elementary level.
- Without exception, all those who can walk to a school would attend that school. This would be true at both high schools, all three junior high schools and, in most instances, in the elementary schools.
- Minority populations would be equally balanced at all levels.
- Room for growth in educational programs, continued class size reductions and space for unexpected population increases would be assured.
- Buildings would be more effectively utilized.
- The number of teachers and administrators would be reduced.
- Bus runs would be streamlined, consolidated and shortened. At the elementary level there would be a savings of two bus runs.
- Art and music programs would be guaranteed a room in every building.
- Elementary feeder patterns would be simplified and improved, helping to maintain the concept of neighborhood schools, guaranteeing that friends would move together and strengthening links between schools and faculties.
- Increased safety would be provided by eliminating crossing and walking along major arteries.
- Tax dollars would be saved.

Chapter V

Public Relations; Communications



"If ever information, communications and public relations were needed, it is when a district closes a school." That statement from a superintendent responding to the survey for this report pinpoints a crucial task superintendents must undertake as people in the community become concerned, fearful or angry about the fate of their schools. Public information, never a frill, becomes an imperative in districts coping with the effects of decline.

Another view states that the communications challenges presented by declining enrollment, particularly in the closing of schools, call for school administrators to "go back to the essence of communications," that is, listening on the one hand and creating understanding on the other. The case studies throughout this report demonstrate how districts handle both of these simultaneously.

School Closing Requires Consensus Building

To some degree, closing a school represents a political decision. Therefore, school communications experts advise, it requires a process of consensus building. Why? To make a proposed closing or other solutions to declining enrollment as acceptable as possible to the people of the community. This in turn, requires district officials to:

- Understand their community, e.g., its history and its reaction to and attitude toward various issues.
- Understand the demographics of the community, e.g., the number of homes with and without children in school.
- Use "active" listening skills.

School communications experts may have different views on how to reach and involve the community in decisions on declining enrollment, as case studies throughout this report illustrate. They agree, however, that communications cannot be a one-shot, one-way or crisis effort. Instead, communications and public relations should be carried out as a year-round, comprehensive effort, preferably spearheaded by a school/community relations expert or, in districts lacking such support, by the superintendent.

Other basics of public relations take on increased importance because of the emotionalism that usually accompanies school closings, boundary shifts and staff reductions or transfers. These basics include:

- Base information on fact.
- Set rumors straight quickly.
- Correct misunderstandings.
- Avoid defensiveness.
- Make presentations clear and concise; don't use jargon.
- Avoid arguments.
- Emphasize listening as well as telling.
- Maintain communications with all; even those who protest or have a different point of view.

Most of all, be open and honest with the community on a year-round basis. By doing so, district administrators establish a reputation that can stand them in good stead in times of crisis.

If the superintendent, board members, central office staff and principals establish themselves as educational leaders in the community — persons who understand the needs of children — the community will be more accepting of the decisions made in the face of declining enrollment. Attaining the confidence of the community, however, cannot be done overnight. That's where a year-round public relations/communications effort comes in.

Elements in a Communications Program

Experts recommend these elements in a school

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communications program for any district, whether it is shrinking or growing, in the first stages of decline, or a shadow of its former self:

- **Be willing to share information — and problems.** The superintendent and board should not consider declining enrollment as "their" problem. Instead, it should be viewed as a community problem.
- **Develop a demographic profile** which includes a history of past and present enrollments and projections for the future. An annual survey or update of demographic information is recommended, with full airing of the findings so board and community members are as knowledgeable as possible and changes do not come as a shock. Discussing enrollment should become almost routine.
- **Conduct a formal or informal community attitude survey annually** to determine community members' reactions to district programs and how they feel, for example, about various methods of dealing with declining enrollment. Community opinion could point the way to a solution. If, for example, a survey reveals that the people want schools to run on a more cost effective basis than in the past, district officials could say to the community, "One way we can improve our cost efficiency is to consider the closing of some schools that are under-enrolled." An advantage of a community attitude survey is that two-way communication is a natural outcome.

  Small districts with limited staff can do a community attitude survey on an informal basis. One idea is to have parents fill out a "report card" rating school programs.
- **Assure two-way communication through building level and districtwide advisory groups.** This idea is suitable for any district, large or small. Advisory groups give district administrators an ear to the ground regarding community feelings and recommendations for improving school programs or decisions.

  Such groups should, of course, recognize their advisory capacity and understand that the board of education is responsible for decision making.
- **Provide opportunities for all citizens to hear and be heard** on school problems and ways to deal with them. This can be accomplished through newsletters to staff and parents and open meetings, in addition to board meetings, at which demographic changes and their effects on the schools are discussed. In some communities,

Checklist for Internal and External Communications

School administrators cannot afford to neglect communicating with either staff members or community members, or as one respondent to the survey for this report put it: "Be sure to keep everybody informed about everything every step of the way."

Here's a checklist to make that job a little easier:

Name of group: Board members
Methods of communicating:
- _____ Memoranda
- _____ Background papers
- _____ Briefing documents
- _____ Presentations at board meetings

Name of group: School principals
Methods of communicating:
- _____ Discussions
- _____ Memoranda
- _____ Newsletter or bulletin
- _____ Active involvement in studies and advisory groups

Name of group: Teachers
Methods of communicating:
- _____ Personal contact with the superintendent
- _____ Indirect contact through principal
- _____ Copies of board announcements
- _____ Newsletter or bulletin
- _____ Involvement in studies and advisory groups
- _____ Inservice training day devoted to topic of declining enrollment

Name of group: The community
Methods of communicating:
- _____ Direct contact with superintendent or principal
- _____ Newsletters
- _____ Newspapers
- _____ Radio
- _____ Television
- _____ Question and answer sessions at PTA meetings
- _____ Neighborhood hearings and information sessions
- _____ General information leaflets
- _____ Presentations before civic, social, church and special groups

such meetings are held in cooperation with city or county government.

Many districts have found the AASA slide/tape presentations on demographic changes valuable in making the people aware that the changes are nationwide in scope. For more information on the presentations, contact the American Association of School Administrators, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, Va. 22209.

- **The board should have clear policies** regarding such matters as school closings, staff reduction and staff transfer. (See further information on policies in Chapter IV.)
- **The district should have in place guidelines or a "yardstick" to measure change.** Otherwise, the board may appear arbitrary in deciding to close a school when enrollment falls below a certain level. This yardstick is a baseline for any communications plan and, once adopted by the board, it should be widely publicized.

Case Study: Lakewood, Colo.

Guidelines and policies, when combined with findings from community attitude surveys and advisory groups, and recommendations from task forces or committees, constitute the groundwork for board decisions.

As the case studies in this report illustrate, getting to this point can take several years. The community must be kept informed every step of the way; however, it is when the recommendations are out on the table that a stepped up communications effort may be required.

To illustrate: The Jefferson County Public Schools, Lakewood, Colo., received a comprehensive report detailing possible solutions to enrollment decline in July 1976. A Task Force on Student Housing Alternatives was appointed in the fall of 1977. It presented its recommendations on school closings and boundary adjustments in January 1978.

At the same time, the task force, working with Gary Marx, then communications director for the district, also submitted a communications plan for board approval.

The aim was to enable the board to act on the recommendations within two months, yet allow time for staff and community reaction to the recommendations.

Here are some highlights of the communications plan:

Jan. 17 Completion of the task force report.

20 The report is delivered to the board.

20 Condensed version of the report is reproduced in the district newsletter.

20 Slide presentation of highlights of the report is prepared for use at community meetings.

24 The report is presented to principals, other key administrators, employee association leaders. They are trained to hold similar meetings for teachers and other staff members.

24 A news conference is held, with the report embargoed until 7:30 p.m.

24 The board meets to hear, discuss and accept the report for further study.

25 Meetings are held by building principals and other administrators in each school and department. A "feedback sheet" is used to record questions, concerns and suggestions for improvement to the task force report. The sheets are sent to the district communications office.

25 A "special report" in the form of a newsletter is sent to parents and other "key communicators" in the community.

26 Principals meet with school advisory committees and PTA leaders. Again, the feedback sheets are used to record suggestions.

30 Meetings are held in areas of the community affected by the plan. Feedback sheets are used to record suggestions.

In February, the communications plan called for publication of the staff transfer policy in the newsletter of the local education association; additional community meetings to develop alternative recommendations to the task force report; further work with the media in providing coverage of meetings and other activities; compilation of the recommendations, concerns and questions recorded on the feedback sheets, presentation to the board, the superintendent and the task force; and preparation of a list of the most frequently asked questions (and the answers) for the local weekly newspaper and school newsletters.

Two additional review sessions were open to the public to gain further recommendations for consideration by the task force. Finally, it developed amendments to its recommendations, and they were publicized.

In early March the board met and made its decisions, which included the closing of 11 schools.

Questions the Community Asks About School Closings

One of the things a school district can do to facilitate communications with the community about proposed solutions to declining enrollment is to compile a list of the questions most frequently asked by citizens, staff and board members.

District officials can then supply straightforward answers to the questions and make the list available at community and board meetings, through building principals and to media representatives.

In the Jefferson County Public Schools, Lakewood, Colo., such a list was prepared following presentation of recommendations to close schools and change boundaries.

A local weekly newspaper printed the list of questions and answers along with an announcement of citizen meetings to hear community reaction to the recommendations.

Here are some of the questions Jefferson County officials had to answer (due to space limitations, the answers are not included):

- Q. What criteria were used in deciding which schools to close and in making boundary changes?
- Q. What involvement did citizens have in recommendations presented in the housing report?
- Q. How many additional children will be bused because of consolidation of schools and boundary changes?
- Q. What will be the additional busing costs?
- Q. How much will be saved annually from closing or making new uses of school buildings? What are the cost breakdowns?
- Q. What happens to teachers at schools being closed?
- Q. If the principals and staff are not being eliminated, how can it be considered a saving when the schools are closed?
- Q. What happens when children are transferred into schools which are on year-around school?
- Q. What effect will consolidation have on class size?
- Q. Why is it said that the bigger schools have better education advantages than the smaller ones? Isn't it true that some of the smaller schools have the highest test scores.
- Q. What is the ideal number of pupils for a school?
- Q. Where will the money from the sale of buildings and property go?
- Q. What is the market for used schools?
- Q. How many temporary buildings will be added to schools which have been consolidated?
- Q. What prompted such a massive change in the district as is proposed in the recommendations?
- Q. What effect will the opinions and suggestions of the community have on the recommendations?

Following the board's decisions, the communications plan called for: media reports, preparation of a district newsletter detailing the decisions, meetings with principals of schools affected by the decisions and formation of "implementation committees."

The purpose of the committees was to provide a smooth transition from old to new schools. Each committee included the principals of two combined schools, PTA leadership and teachers from each school. The committees' work was publicized by the school and community press.

The implementation committees served a variety of important needs, explained Marx, who is now AASA associate executive director in charge of communications.

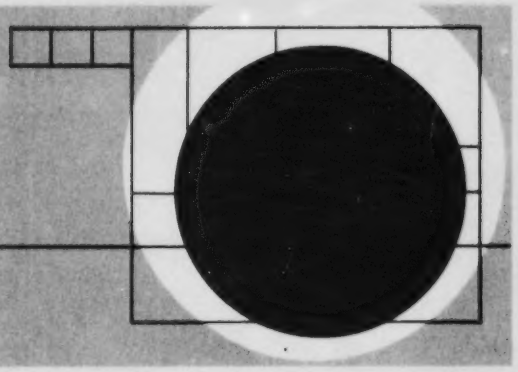
If, for example, parents were concerned about the new school their children would be bused to, Marx said, the implementation committees would arrange to give parents a chance to ride school buses to the new school, where they would meet the principal.

"Even with a detailed process for dealing with decline and an effective communications plan," Marx cautioned, districts should expect some conflict.

In the Jefferson County School District, an effort was made to recall board members (it was unsuccessful), and legal action was taken by groups opposed to the changes (the district won in court). By August, Marx reported, the transition to comply with the board decisions was completed.

Chapter VI

Empty School Space



Empty school space — what's to be done with it? In locating it and in affirming that the space is no longer needed for instructional activities, the school district and its community have already taken up the question of what to do with it. Issues of reuse are part of the process of emptying classrooms and closing schools.

The final decisions and the details of recycling, however, remain with the board.

After the planning task force has given its advice, *after* the community has had its say, *after* the board's probing of public opinion and staff wishes, there comes the moment of truth. It is when the board takes a new look at the total problem of empty space and when the board must come up with final answers to a series of questions in the light of past advice and new conditions.

Among the questions:

- Should the vacant classrooms or buildings be held in inventory against the chance that future rising enrollments will require their use again?
- To what extent should the district's own needs for additional space be considered before disposal?
- Is the district's need for income from its real estate so urgent as to justify sale, rental, leasing and joint leasing?
- Is the district willing to turn over its vacant space (or portions of it) to public agencies without gain for itself, simply in the public interest?

In view of the uncertain signals from demographers that enrollments may begin to rise in this decade, school districts are asking more frequently today than five or six years ago whether it is prudent to keep vacant school buildings under board control.

The future benefits of such an approach may be considerable, but the hazards for the present may be chilling.

"Old schools are new resources." — Fred M. Hechinger, *The New York Times*.

As Bill Wise, a Brevard County, Fla., board member, pointed out to a group of board members, preserving or mothballing a building involves much more than walking out and locking the doors. "The plant and its contents must be protected during the time it is not occupied," Wise said. "It must be protected against weather and vandalism, and it must be maintained at a level to prevent deterioration of the structure."

The Ohio School Business Officials estimated that to winterize a school building may consume as many as 700 man-hours of custodial work and that the total cost of keeping the building safe for one year may exceed $7,000 (1977 figure). The business officials also estimated that winterizing means attention to more than 60 items of work — from shutting off water at the curb and opening all flush valves to covering outside air and exhaust grills.

A problem familiar to administrators is the hazard of vandalism. An unoccupied building is a major target for vandals. Board member Wise pointed out that "vandalism can destroy a substantial building in a short period of time, and steps required to deter it can add considerably to the cost of retaining a building for future use. Stepped-up surveillance by security personnel, the inclusion of security alarm systems and increased exterior lighting are but three of many security measures sometimes needed."

Consider, too, the reaction of property owners surrounding the empty school. Nothing is a greater eyesore and a source of irritation than a boarded-up structure or one that is allowed to deteriorate at the

expense of neighboring property owners.

Nevertheless, mothballing a school building cannot always be ruled out. One conclusion: Mothballing a school is an alternative worth considering only when a district is reasonably sure of its future needs and when it is confident that the building can be protected sufficiently to be usable when it is needed.

Option # 1: Conversion

There is a strong current of opinion among the superintendents surveyed for this report that district needs for surplus space should be given consideration above all others.

Larger and affluent school districts have devoted entire school plants or major portions of them to the following:

- Alternative education facilities.
- Vocational education centers.
- Adult education classes.
- Preschool and Head Start facilities.

Both large and small districts have put surplus space to work by shaping it for:

- Teacher offices.
- Teacher workrooms.
- Teacher lounges.
- Instructional media centers.
- Teacher centers.
- Supplementary library collections.
- Conference rooms.
- Talented and gifted (TAG) rooms.
- Workrooms for volunteers.
- Student study carrels.
- Storage space for industrial arts, arts education, science and music.
- Warehousing, to provide easy access to materials and supplies for individual buildings.

Option #2: Joint Occupancy

What is to be done with surplus space in schools which remain open and have on-going educational programs?

Joint occupancy is one answer. It is a concept at work in the Montgomery County (Md.) Public Schools. Robert S. Posilkin, who coordinates the joint occupancy operation in district schools, defined the concept as "leased surplus space to be allocated on a full-time basis for a qualified user."

Coordinator Posilkin pointed out that the process of school closings is a requisite for joint occupancy administration. The space to be leased has to be the subject of the same considerations which govern the closing of a school.

Note: Arguments against joint occupancy and school closings are often identical.

Once space in a school building is designated as surplus, joint occupancy provides two benefits for the district: (1) It generates needed income and (2) it provides space for organizations which can benefit students and the community.

Montgomery County school officials believe that no space should be leased until it is clear that the tenancy will not in any way be adverse to the district's educational programs. This conviction was formalized by the Montgomery County Board of Education when it directed "that the superintendent actively seek joint occupants who will complement, support and benefit the educational programs for . . . the students."

A board policy on joint occupancy, Posilkin stated, can and should identify the types of groups which should be given priority for placement when space is available for lease.

"Nonprofit organizations, for example, may be designated as high priority users, compared with commercial or profit-making ventures," Posilkin said. "Even within the nonprofit category, a board policy can identify the tenant having the highest priority for obtaining surplus school space. Day care programs have such priority in Montgomery County."

The Montgomery County School District succeeded in placing day care programs under joint occupancy agreements in 35 schools. Officials are pleased. They say that the day care programs, while not under the sponsorship of the Board of Education, meet community needs and, at the same time, expand the opportunity at each school to serve children. (In some instances, parents enrolled their children in the public schools, rather than private schools, because child care facilities were available in public school buildings.)

Other desirable tenants using school space are groups and agencies concerned with recreation, adult literacy, autistic children, health and family welfare. Some of the tenants are county and state governments; others are nonprofit, non-governmental groups. One of the more unusual tenants is a group which recycles toys and instructional materials. Teachers and parents in the neighborhood where the school is located are beneficiaries of this effort.

"Education is a changing industry with new opportunities." — William F. Keough Jr., a leader in the early (1969) phases of decline.

Option #3: Leasing Classrooms

The idea of leasing empty classrooms in operating schools has easily leapt across the continent. Supt. Claude Turner of the Belmont School District (near San Francisco) was so impressed with the notion that, finding a prohibition in California law against such practice, he succeeded in organizing an effort to change the statute. That was in 1977. Soon after, the Belmont City Council and the city's planning department were helping Turner develop the idea. So were committees of citizens, whose chief concern was to assure that tenants taking leases would not disrupt school and classroom work. As in Maryland's Montgomery County, prospective tenants whose activities related to education, child care, recreation and family welfare were given priority, but such enterprises as a commercial art studio, dance school and headquarters for a labor union were also welcome. Turner believes it is good for students to have contact with private enterprise. "Makes learning more relevant," he said during the early days of the leasing operations.

Some other California school districts (in San Carlos, Los Altos and Modesto) affected by declining enrollments are also receptive to the leasing of classrooms in schools where regular classes operate.

Administrators in these districts favor the plan because it makes the closing of a school unnecessary, at least for the time being.

Richard Scardamaglia, superintendent of the Los Altos School District, said he likes the concept because it helps keep neighborhood schools in the community. Furthermore, he expects a turnaround in enrollment. Should this happen, the school building "would be there for us to use." In the meantime, the school district was getting about $250 a month for a leased classroom (in 1980).

Leasing — What to watch for: A school district which plans to lease school space should keep in mind that leasing is property management, and property management is a specialization. It is best done by a school business manager — not by a principal or central office administrator.

The Madison (Wis.) Metropolitan School District set up an office of property management within the school district's division of business services. The head of the operation is Howard L. Sampson, the director of business services.

Sampson defines his role "as preserving and increasing the value of the school property while generating income." To achieve that goal, Sampson said, a school property manager must price each classroom unit (or combination of units) correctly for the market, and then must attract the most desirable tenants "who are in mutual accord with the aims of the Board of Education."

Sampson has found newspaper advertising the best means for reaching prospective tenants. But all applicants must be carefully screened and evaluated to make certain that the tenancy will indeed preserve or increase the school property value, he cautioned.

The lease is the instrument for assuring that. A school district can develop its own lease forms, or it can obtain them from local real estate boards. "One advantage of utilizing a standard form," Sampson said, "is that the person in the school district can study it in advance, become familiar with its terms and ask for help from legal counsel, as necessary."

As every business manager knows, a lease is a legal document binding on both parties who sign it. "Valid considerations to be paid," that is, the payment of money, is what brings the lease to life.

With the help of a standard lease form supplied by the real estate industry and guided by a lawyer familiar with real estate, school officials should have no trouble working out a legal and satisfactory leasing arrangement. Sampson lists the major points to watch for in drafting a lease:

"A description of the premises is essential. If the property to be rented includes land, its legal description should be included. When renting a portion of space, the bounds of the space must be accurately described.

"The length of time a lease is to run should be specified in the agreement. Leases may contain an option to renew, an automatic extension clause or a clause allowing the tenant to terminate the agreement prematurely upon payment of a penalty.

"A lease should include restrictions on the use of the premises. The board of education should retain the right to refuse any subletting of the leased premises by the tenant. The rights of the board and the tenant in cases of fire, loss or damage should be included in the lease."

As a recap, the Educational Facilities Laboratories (EFL), New York City, developed a list of the major clauses a lease agreement should contain:

- Description of property.
- Terms of lease and conditions for termination and renewal.
- Insurance coverage. Lessee is usually required to carry personal injury or death and property damage insurance of a stated amount. Lessor usually carries fire and extended coverage, and lessee reimburses its cost.
- Hold harmless clause: Lessor assumes no liability for any claims arising out of use of facility.
- Type of uses permitted: Lessee may be required to secure a use permit assuring that the proposed use is allowed within the zoning code.
- Hours of operation permitted.
- Conditions for making major structural changes, if allowed. Usually the lessor's permission is required, and the lessee pays costs.
- Types of minor facility modification and decoration permitted, with or without permission of lessor. Lessee usually pays costs.
- Services to be provided by lessor: typically these include routine maintenance and repair, utilities, trash collection and security. Lessee usually pays costs.
- Responsibility for major repairs and capital improvements, usually the lessor's.
- Methods for handling complaints and disputes.
- Termination procedure: lessee may be required to return premises to original condition or lessor may assume all rights to improvements and alterations.
- Taxes: Sometimes a lessee is required to pay any property tax which might be assessed, and may terminate the lease if taxes are assessed.
- Any other special conditions or reference to rules and regulations which may be developed, e.g., (1) in an emergency, the school district can reclaim the building for school purposes; (2) with two owners, each party has right of first refusal, at no cost, if other party wants to give up property; (3) restrictions on signs and advertisements.

Option #4: Community Use

School districts, in ever increasing numbers, are offering their surplus space for use as community centers. A community school center, as defined by the Educational Facilities Laboratories, is a place bringing together services for health, recreation, day care, senior citizens, job placement, vocational training. Quite often, additional agencies include the public library, performing and creative arts and

Office Space for Teachers Boosts Morale

Use vacant classrooms as office space for teachers? A farfetched idea?

Consider: College instructors have office space. Department heads in elementary and secondary schools have office space. Classroom teachers should, too. Such use of vacant space should add to teacher productivity and give teachers a morale boost.

The author of that suggestion, Samuel E. Brownell, has top credentials in education. A former U.S. commissioner of education and superintendent of schools in Detroit, Brownell now serves as professor emeritus of Yale University.

"Teachers need a place other than the classroom where they can safely keep their records and reports, texts and other books they need, and where they could carry on essential work beyond the meeting of pupils in class groups for instruction," Brownell said. "Having a place where a pupil (or parent) or another teacher could expect to find the teacher when not engaged in classroom instruction for a brief conference or question, could enhance pupil-teacher relationships, could add to a teacher's identity and be more than just a convenience."

With a relatively small expenditure, most classrooms could be converted to a cluster of teacher offices without changing the lighting, heating or ventilation systems.

Brownell and others believe that conversion of extra classrooms to teacher office clusters is an education investment whose time has arrived.

family and youth counseling offices. The board of education makes a major contribution — use of its building under certain conditions.

The EFL reports that a school district has these options for putting to use its surplus space for community purposes:

- The school board can maintain ownership, keep part of the building active as a school and lease parts to different users.
- The school board can maintain ownership, use none of the building for regular school purposes and lease parts to different users.
- The school board can maintain ownership and lease the entire facility to a nonprofit group that serves as a managing agent.
- The school board turns over the school permanently to a public agency.
- The school board turns over the school permanently to a private community organization.

Scores upon scores of school districts have helped create community centers with all or part of their unused space. The EFL identified these communities which have successfully turned unused school spaces to community purposes:

Federal Way, Wash.: One former elementary school serves an entire county. **St. Paul, Minn.:** 10,000 square feet of former school space turned into a multiple-service center by a community group supported by United Way. **Elmhurst, Ill.:** A former elementary school turned into a community recreation center. **Urbana, Ill.:** The school board gets $1 a year from the city's park and recreation department, which operates a surplus school as an activities center. **Arlington County, Va.:** Several of the county's elementary schools and two former junior high schools are now recreation centers offering a wide variety of services. **Dayton, Ohio:** The Roosevelt Community Education Center, a huge facility (700,000 square feet) is becoming a national example of how a former school, when operated for community purposes, can help revitalize a neighborhood. **Kalamazoo, Mich.:** An aging high schol building serves three purposes: as a facility for general community use; as housing for alternative educational programs; and as a theater center, whose top-notch stage and auditorium are rented for many different purposes. **Picket, Wis.:** This is an example of a rural community's dedication to its seven-room schoolhouse, now serving as a community-owned, all-purpose community center. **Concord, Mass.:** An eight-room school built in 1917 is now under town control, some of its space being used for day care, adult education, senior citizens. **Hamden, Conn.:** When the school board declared three of its buildings surplus in 1979, they reverted to the municipality (by state law) and became headquarters for emergency and survival services — food stamp applications, emergency fuel and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

Case Study: Closing of a School; Opening of a Community Center

Education is a "minority activity" in many communities. That fact is illustrated by Whitefish Bay, Wis., where fewer than 30 percent of the families have children in the public schools.

This means that the base for supporting the public schools is diminishing. Educators now have to reach out to populations other than children and youth. Wisconsin already has a noble tradition of serving community groups. The pioneering university extension and community schools in the state provide prime illustrations. That is why closed schools in Wisconsin often are turned into community education facilities.

In 1978, LeRoy Rieck, the district's new superintendent, saw that declining enrollment would require the closing of an elementary school. Immediately, the district considered use of the closed facility (the Henry Clay Elementary School) as a community education center.

As a first step, Rieck and a member of his staff visited Roseville, Minn., since that district's community education program has attracted national attention for excellence. Following that, Rieck sponsored the creation of a committee to study the proposed transition of the elementary school into one serving the interests of the people — mothers with young children, senior citizens, adult education classes, scouting organizations, historical societies and nonpublic educational groups.

Two reasons contributed to the decision to turn the closed school into a community education center. Rieck noted: "We were interested in tying together

> ***"The basic reason for closing a school is to improve the quality of education. There is no purpose in consolidation if it does not provide better education."*** — Supt. M. Donald Thomas, Salt Lake City, Utah.

the many education activities going on in the community — some sponsored by municipal agencies, some by the school, by the state university and by private organizations. We thought it would be helpful to pull many of these together and give them one location. Then, too, we wanted to use the building for programs in which we had an interest and which would promote our community education thrust.

"Second, we wanted to maintain a buffer facility in case of an enrollment turnabout. We reasoned that if the decline should reverse itself, we wanted to have a facility to accommodate the new pupils. We wanted to keep down the cost of maintaining that buffer facility and the best way, we thought, was to lease it, under carefully defined conditions, for community education purposes."

Note, however, the observation offered by Kevin Clark of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards: "Finding a valuable use for a soon-to-be vacated building doesn't guarantee that the community will accept its being vacated in the first place. Only careful planning and communication will make that possible."

Rieck's strategy in moving toward the changeover of the elementary school to a community center included spending two years explaining to the people that the enrollment decline was drastic and that the lack of pupils in the elementary schools would make it impossible to carry on a good educational program in that building.

"Our whole argument was based on the quality of education. We didn't talk about finances other than to present it as a concern," Rieck said.

Personal contact between the superintendent and community groups played a major part in "selling" the school closing. "I personally met with 15 groups of citizens. At these meetings we first talked about people — rather than buildings: how students, teachers and parents were affected by the enrollment decline. Then we talked about programs: how curricular and extracurricular programs were affected. Then we talked about facilities and, lastly, about finances."

Individual citizens contributed more than 1,200 comments on the effects of declining enrollments on schools and programs. Only three of the statements had anything to do with money.

The Whitefish Bay Board of Education finally voted in June 1980 to close the elementary school and at the same time made its decision to study detailed plans for community education. Within three months, the Henry Clay Elementary School became the Henry Clay Community Education Center.

Rieck concluded: "The most valuable lesson we learned was simply this: When citizens, staff, students and the school board are provided with an opportunity and adequate time to study the facts bearing on reorganization planning, they will almost invariably arrive at the decision which enables the district to provide the best educational program for students.

"In our case," Rieck added, "the entire educational community was involved in our planning process. I think it's significant that during and after the vote to close buildings, I never received a call of protest nor did any citizen speak against the closing at meetings of the school board."

Case Study: Leasing School Ground For 99 Years

The El Segundo (Calif.) Unified School District closed one elementary school in 1975 and its only junior high school in 1979. In accordance with state law, the Board of Education appointed an advisory committee to recommend alternative uses for the two surplus properties.

After long study, a consensus was reached: The district would be prudent to retain the junior high school site and facilities for at least five years and to watch enrollment trends during that period. However, community members were firmly convinced that the elementary school might never be needed again for educational purposes.

That conviction led to further study by the board: What is the best way to get the most income from the property while, at the same time, protecting the board's equity? Would a long-term ground lease be legal? Would it be feasible? How should the board go about getting such a lease?

It turned out that California law permitted such long-term lease of school ground.

"Since we didn't have the real estate, legal or financial expertise on our staff to deal with this problem," said Richard V. Bertain, assistant superintendent, "we felt compelled to utilize the services of qualified professionals from the private sector: a commercial real estate brokerage company, a law firm specializing in real estate and a financial expert in real estate investments. These were retained to assist us in evaluating the feasibility of our entering into a 99-year unsubordinated ground lease."

Then came a series of board actions which included:

- Reviewing with the county counsel many legal

aspects of the proposed action.

- Discussing with municipal officials the zone changes that might be necessary in the future.
- Planning for title search with a qualified title company.
- Retaining an engineering firm to conduct a boundary survey.

Next came the task of selecting a real estate broker and retaining specialists with the ability to evaluate potential bidders. Further, the board thought it advisable to name an advisory committee to help select a responsible and qualified bidder for the property.

It was necessary to prepare all lease documents prior to going to bid so that potential bidders would be aware of all implications of the various conditions to the ground lease.

Finally came a board resolution and notice of intention to lease real estate property. Legal advisors were available at all times to assure that the board complied with all legally mandated time requirements and to open the bids at the specified time. The board allowed one week for the district's review committee to evaluate the bids and to assess the qualifications of the highest bidder.

The board of education accepted a high bid of $254,000 annual rent for the surplus property. The bidder was a highly respected developer of Los Angeles. Under the general terms of the lease, the developer has the right to build new construction, paying an annual rent to the school district, which retains title to the land.

Municipal Finance Officers Recommend Leasing

"Check the title to your school property — building and site," advises Don O'Neil, Topeka's associate superintendent of management services. "It may contain surprises."

Alert superintendents do just that, as they search for legal or other barriers to the sale, lease, rental or joint lease of vacant school space.

The AASA survey for this report shows that administrators are aware of at least seven possible barriers to the use of vacant or under-utilized school space. In order of frequency, the responses mentioned the following:

1. Zoning laws and restrictions which seek to preserve the character of a neighborhood, control traffic and even outdoor signs.
2. Local ordinances or other legal provisions which allow only nonprofit organizations to use the schools.
3. Deeds that preclude use of public schools for nonschool purposes.
4. Need for a public referendum to authorize the sale of school property.
5. State legislative authority (often delegated to the municipality) which controls the disposition of vacant school buildings.
6. Environmental considerations.
7. Resolutions and other protest actions by neighborhood associations seeking to bar the turnover of school buildings for noneducational uses.

Municipal officials may turn out to be a district's best friends in helping to dispose of surplus space. There are two reasons. First, the municipality itself is often pinched for money to build or buy new space. City, town, village and county governments are looking to vacant schools, under-utilized schools, empty classrooms and seldom used classrooms for relief to their space needs. Second, the municipal official, especially the local fiscal officer, may be the district's No. 1 expert on the No. 1 means of school reuse — leasing.

Leasing is a $100 billion industry in the United States, and it is growing rapidly. Individuals, companies, organizations and governments are leasing an ever expanding volume of computers, office equipment, ambulances, trucks and medical equipment. Municipalities are big users of leased space. They lease it on a permanent as well as temporary basis. They will need more of it in the years ahead. They're especially interested in schools.

So greatly are municipalities intrigued by vacant school space that the Municipal Finance Officers Association recently published a study entitled *Municipal Leasing: Its Role in Community Development with Emphasis on Surplus Schools.* (Available from MFOA, Suite 650, 1750 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20006; $12.)

The document, although somewhat technical, presents strong arguments why municipalities should seek to lease vacant school space and why school districts should turn first to the municipality

for advice on how to dispose of it.

What emerges from this study is the municipal finance officers' conviction that school districts should give first consideration to leasing, ahead of all other approaches for reuse and disposal.

The study concludes: "If (the school district) desires to retain its flexibility to reuse the property for school purposes in the future and to retain control over its reuse during the interim, then leasing represents the most logical solution. In fact, leasing makes financial and economic sense whether school reuse is expected in the short- or long-run."

The municipal officers issue a warning, however: Leasing implies that the school board becomes a property manager. In the words of the study: "Leasing implies a willingness and a capacity to exercise an active property management role in obtaining and monitoring tenants and in maintaining the property. True, the school board could contract for these services, but its oversight responsibilities should not be minimized. But more important is that the school building should be viewed and managed as a *community resource* to be used in such a way as to maximize its positive impact on the surrounding neighborhood . . . ."

For the school business officer, or administrator in charge of property management, here are two recommendations from the municipal officers:

1. Become familiar with the varied leasing arrangements and the one that best suits your district. There are the standard lease, lease sale, sale-lease-back and lease-leaseback contracts. Work up a one-page memo to the school board showing the effects and benefits of these different leasing approaches. The local municipal finance officer can probably help with technical resources and know-how.

2. A lease-leaseback agreement, in the opinion of the national finance officers group, is the most advantageous to both parties. Such a contract "leaves with the school board the ownership, control and use of the building without the attendant property management responsibilities and operating and maintenance expenses." Further, the lease-leaseback provides the school with a stable revenue, "along with the opportunity to benefit from future property value appreciation as long as it retains ownership."

For the top school administrator and the board, the municipal officers cite the following two policy notes on important topics:

1. Who owns the school facility? The answer lies with state laws, but it also may be buried in the local municipality's records. The municipal finance study reminds school administrators that in some states the school district owns the school building outright; in others (e.g., Virginia and Maryland), a surplus facility reverts to the municipality or county; and in others (e.g., California), it reverts to the state. Still others (e.g., Boston) are built, owned and retained by municipalities. In at least one city, Nashville, Tenn., the surplus facility is to be administered by

There Is Life After Closing

Closed school buildings never die. They continue serving the community.

Proof of this statement is offered by the Columbus (Ohio) Public Schools. Supt. Joseph Davis made a quick check recently of the uses found for many of the 34 schools closed and sold by the district since 1972.

The surplus schools have been bought by groups and associations for use as an Ohio State University community center, cable TV studios and television training facilities, a child guidance center, a mentally retarded facility, senior citizen apartments and an arts council headquarters.

Davis is proud that "all of the organizations using surplus school buildings in Columbus are community-service oriented. School buildings seem to be especially suited to their needs.

"So far closing and selling a school in Columbus has not been the end of its usefulness to the community," Davis concluded.

the Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County Regional Government.

Remember: In the strictest constitutional sense, school buildings and grounds are the property of the state, not the local district. Because the school was paid for with local property tax money, citizens often feel it belongs to them. Says the study: "In emotional terms it (the school building) has a community ownership character to it which other local facilities usually do not have. Nevertheless, since school authorities are creatures of the state, the property belongs to the state, whose legislature may or may not delegate control of the property to the local school district."

2. When is space surplus? Criteria, board declarations and board resolutions can and do pronounce the vacancy of school space, or they declare that a school is surplus. Often such official actions are based on thin recommendations, and on criteria too hurriedly applied. The municipal officers suggest that a school district develop a definition of "surplus space" prior to applying it to any particular school.

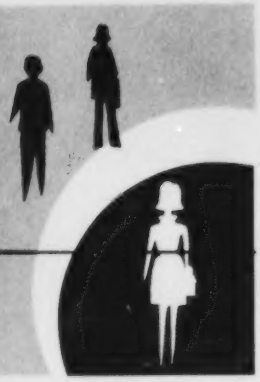
The finance officers like the definition of surplus space adopted by Newton, Mass. It contains two parts. First, it states that individual elementary schools should have sufficient classrooms to continue Newton's established pupil-teacher ratio of 23.4 to 1, plus resource rooms equal in number to 15 percent of the classrooms. Thus, if a school had 468 students, it would need 20 homerooms (468 divided by 23.4) plus three resource rooms (15 percent of 20). This policy states that library, gymnasium and auditorium are additional to these figures.

Second, the Newton formula seeks to "reserve" a number of "geographically apportioned rooms" for uses such as "super resource rooms, after-school daycare and cooperative, funded nursery schools."

The study concluded: "The Newton formula is able to take into account the individual needs of each school and the overall needs of the total school system. By defining exactly what is needed prior to any decisions regarding specific schools, a potentially explosive situation is defused before it can become an emotional issue."

Chapter VII

The People Problem



Inevitably, a school district with declining enrollment will find itself with "excess" teachers. The word is in quotes because organized teachers often object to "excess." In that case, make it "teachers which the school district cannot employ because of reduced funds and shrinking student body." The reality, however described, is that some teachers must be laid off.

Fortunate is the school district which plans ahead and brings about a decrease in teachers in an orderly manner over a period of years. With long-range plans, school administrators have opportunities (1) to avoid hiring teachers who are qualified to teach only one subject; (2) to set up a strong evaluation system that will help prune teachers who do not meet adequate standards and (3) to prevent incompetent teachers from gaining tenure.

Such far-reaching personnel measures help when the crunch comes. When it does come — and the need to decrease staff is immediate — districts should think first of attrition. Then of early voluntary retirement. Then of other measures, such as liberal long-term leave policies (to give teachers a chance to look for employment elsewhere) and, next, part-time employment for teachers in the district. As a last resort, districts should apply reduction in force policies and procedures.

Voluntary Early Retirement

Voluntary early retirement has intrigued some school administrators as a painless way to decrease staff. It has been tested in Pasadena, Calif.; Salt Lake City, Utah; Beatrice, Nebr.; Madison, Wis.; Jacksonville, Ill.; Mason City, Iowa; Williamsport, Pa.; Bay Shore, N.Y.; and Fairfield, Conn., to name fewer than a dozen districts.

Supt. Donald Thomas, Salt Lake City, likes early retirement for staff members who have given 30 years of service or who have reached age 60. He reports that "a large number of teachers and administrators" took advantage of such a plan in his district.

Supt. Robert L. Crowe, Jacksonville, Ill., began early retirement incentives in 1976, but gave them up when Illinois introduced a statewide plan. (Jacksonville's program is described in the October 1980 issue of *Executive Educator*.) Crowe said the program in his district was "quite effective"; consequently, he may reinstitute it over and above the state's program.

In Williamsport, members of the local education association may receive a $10,000 cash payment if they retire at age 55, provided they have at least 15 years of service in the district and do not accept a teaching job in another district in Pennsylvania. The amount of the bonus decreases each year retirement is delayed after age 55.

Bay Shore, N.Y., was considering a retirement incentive plan at the time this report was going to press. It would work like this:

Any teacher (who meets the required conditions) is eligible "to apply for and receive a pay differential of $10,000." This lump sum is to be paid on July 3 of the year of retirement and is to be credited, for retirement purposes, as being paid for services rendered during the final full year of teaching. Retirement is effective one day later, that is, July 4.

To be eligible for the Bay Shore plan, a teacher must:

1. Be age 55 during the school year in which he/she applies for the benefit and have completed 20 years of credited service in the New York State Teachers Retirement System. One exception: During the school year 1980-81, teachers over the age of 55 who have completed 20 years of credited service in the New York State Teachers Retirement System will be eligible regardless of age; or

2. Be over age 55 but have completed his/her 20th year of credited service in the New York State Teachers Retirement System during the school year in which he/she applies for the benefit.

3. Submit their application (and resignation as set forth in paragraph 5) not later than January 1 of the school year preceding retirement.

4. Have performed a minimum of five years of full-time service in the district during the past six years.

5. Submit their resignation from the district effective July 4 of the year of retirement together with their application for this benefit.

Teachers who apply for and are granted this benefit may withdraw their application, provided the Board of Education consents. A refusal by the board to such a withdrawal shall not be grievable nor arbitrable nor the subject of any litigation.

The Madison and Green Bay, Wis., school boards have approved "an emeritus program," in which early retirees act as paid consultants for the districts, up to a certain number of days each year. The districts keep the early retirees on health and insurance programs.

A Primer on Reduction in Force

What does your state law say about reduction in force?

This is the first and probably most important question to ask when confronted with the need to separate teachers because of declining enrollment.

Your actions, policies and regulations on reduction in force must be guided by state statutes where they exist. In 1980, 41 of the 50 states had laws relating to reduction in force. Each law was different, and furthermore, was affected by interpretations of the courts.

In general, the state laws accepted as justifiable the following reasons for reducing staff: (1) enrollment decline; (2) fiscal, economic or budgetary stringencies; (3) reorganization or consolidation of school districts; (4) changes in the number of teaching positions; and (5) curtailment of programs, courses and services.

On the surface, then, state laws should present no difficulties to school districts suffering from enrollment decline, as they seek to reduce staff.

However, state statutes do more than identify the basis for which a school board may reduce staff. Some state laws set up an order for suspension or dismissal of teachers. The dictum is clear and simple: Tenured teachers have the benefit over nontenured teachers. And among tenured teachers, those with seniority enjoy the benefit over their younger colleagues. One or two states have utilized a double basis: seniority and merit. Such a formula gives preference to teachers who, regardless of their seniority, have exemplary records of teaching proficiency.

Merit has great weight in determining layoffs of *nontenured teachers*. The courts have ruled that school boards may give preference to the meritorious nontenured teacher over one who has seniority but is less competent.

Due Process: The Essentials

Most state laws provide for a procedural due process for teachers who are to be suspended or dismissed under reduction of force conditions. Regardless of whether due process requirements are part of law, they are so deeply embedded in all tenure and administrative layoffs that school authorities must be keenly sensitive to them. This sensitivity may well apply both for suspension and dismissal procedures — for the good of all concerned.

Due process, stripped to fundamentals, calls for proper notice to the teacher of the action to be taken, a hearing and machinery for appeal. There has been much contention in the courts as to what constitutes "notice" — but regardless of legalisms, the wise and compassionate school administrator takes that extra step to make clear that the teacher to be affected by reduction in force is fully informed about it. Along with the notice of the reasons for dismissal, some state laws require a notice of rights — that is, the right to a hearing and the right to appeal.

A hearing, although essential under tenure laws, may not be required under state law affecting reduction in force. Some have argued that the community debates preceding the closing of a school or reduction of courses due to declining enrollment provide enough basis for teachers to recognize that they must leave the system. Hearings, under the impact of shrinking student population, it had been assumed, would be "idle ceremonies." But during the last several years, teachers have demanded, and state laws have granted, hearings for teachers affected by reduction in force actions of school boards.

Similarly, appeal has been held futile or mere gesture. But, as in the case of hearings, the push is to provide means for appeal for teachers subject to a reduction in force, even though the number of states

with laws specifically mandating appeals is still small.

Such, then, in broad outline, are the state statutory provisions with regard to reduction in force necessary because of declining enrollment and the economic and educational cutbacks which often go along with emptying schools. These overall facts must inevitably lead to study by a district of its state law and what that law says about dismissal of teachers because of conditions caused by declining enrollment.

Written Policies: A Must

The second most important question to ask when laying off teachers, temporarily or permanently, because of declining enrollment and its associated conditions, is this:

How recent, comprehensive and effective are board policies on reduction in force?

That a district must have written policies on reduction in force is incontrovertible. Only with written policies can a district take action in an orderly manner and be ready to meet the challenges to its actions in the courts, at due process hearings and in the arena of public opinion. Without policies, as someone has said, "you are naked to your enemies."

Further, the policies must adhere to state law, must be in line with applicable court decisions and must be in harmony with negotiated staff agreements.

A district that needs to develop such policies from scratch should start now. Critical policies such as those dealing with reduction in staff should not be improvised under spur of emotion or pressure. They should be started long before any full impact of declining enrollments or reduction of force is felt. The board, staff and public generally should have ample time to discuss proposed policy planks as well as options for alternatives.

Who is to take initiative for a first drafting of the policy? The superintendent, a deputy, a subcommittee of the board, a special committee with a mix o representatives from board, administration and staff — all these are possibilities. The main point is that the policy is not to be written during one or two sessions. It is to be *developed* over a period of time, with ample opportunities for many individuals to contribute ideas. Legal counsel should be called in as needed, mostly to provide advice on state law and court decisions, *not* to make determination as to goals or board wishes.

Those responsible for a first draft of the policy will do well to review existing board policies, regulations and practices on personnel. Especially pertinent are the existing termination mechanisms for staff. Can they be used for purposes of reduction of staff due to declining enrollments? Ask legal counsel. Deliberate on the reply.

Review also state statutes, state board regulations, collective bargaining agreements, case law and existing court orders, as well as any orders or agreements growing out of Office of Civil Rights or Department of Justice intervention.

A district should include the following as among the "must" statements to include in its policy:

- The district's power and authority to reduce staff.
- Method of choosing those to be released: role of seniority, merit, specialized teacher talent.
- Treatment of tenured and untenured teachers.
- Criteria for choosing between qualified tenured teachers, when one or more must be released.
- Method and timing of release notifications.
- Opportunity for hearing and appeal (including when they are necessary, and when not).
- Procedures for recall.
- Board provisions for help in placing or retraining displaced teachers.

Administrators experienced with reduction in force policies suggest that the board policy statement be short, with instructions for the superintendent to develop specifics and details on procedures.

A sampling of nearly 100 policy statements and regulations submitted for this AASA report shows that although they tend to include details of procedure, they still leave the superintendent some leeway to fill in additional mechanics of operation.

This sampling also shows that either board policy statements or superintendent regulations may include these elements:

- Definitions of terms used (tenured, untenured, seniority, merit).
- Timetables during which phases of reduction in staff are to occur.

Policies Worth a Second Look

Watchdogs for layoffs and rehires: (Teacher) association representatives will serve as observers in both the layoff and the rehiring process and in the determination of transfers and assignments that may result from such layoffs or rehires — *Bay City, Mich.*

Substandard certification is a weak reed: In reducing staff, the school board shall recognize the standards of accrediting agencies regarding employee qualifications. When it is necessary to release

personnel with substandard certification, the following shall be separated from service in the order listed:

- Staff members who have not met requirements for a Class A certificate or who have not met requirements for his or her position.
- Staff members who have expired certificates or licenses required for their positions.
- Staff members who were initially employed out-of-field and who are teaching out of their areas of certification and for whom no vacancy exists in their areas of certification. — *Burlington, N.C.*

Who shall be recalled and how: The division of human resources shall maintain a list of the names of persons removed from the work force for a period of one year. During that time persons whose names are on the list may be contacted and considered for placement in the open position. Persons will be considered for reemployment in order of the quality of their performance evaluations, with those having the highest rated performance evaluations being considered first for reemployment. The district reserves the right to refuse consideration to those whose performance was rated marginal or unsatisfactory. In those cases where the performance records are relatively equal, the employee with the longer period of continuous employment in the district will be considered first for reemployment. Refusal to accept reemployment in the particular position offered shall result in the removal of the former employee's name from the list. — *Luling, La.*

Appeal process spelled out: The reduction in force policy shall include an appeal process consisting of the following:

1. A review committee comprised of three association members shall be established by the education association.
2. Within four school days of receiving the written notification of recommendation for release, the staff members may submit a written request for review. This written request will be submitted to the president of the education association and the assistant superintendent for personnel.
3. The association review committee shall meet with the assistant superintendent for personnel and with appropriate administrators to review the appeal.
4. If the association review committee, upon reviewing the reasons for release, upholds the decision of the administration, the staff member will be so notified.
5. If the association review committee does not agree with the administration's decision, a hearing shall be held with an executive review committee consisting of the superintendent, president of the education association and president of the board of education.
6. The executive review committee will either uphold or deny the appeal. — *Mt. Prospect, Ill.*

Attrition comes ahead of reduction: Whenever possible, normal attrition will be used whereby teachers who retire or resign will not be replaced if there are fully qualified teachers available who are capable to fill the position and who would otherwise be subject to layoff. — *Needham, Mass.*

Tie breakers for tenured employees: In situations where two or more employees have identical qualifications for seniority, the following criteria will be applied in determining who will remain on the staff and who will be placed on recall.

1. Years of continuous service in the district. (If there is a tie between a teacher with 8 years' service and an M.A. degree and a teacher with 10 years' service and a B.A. degree, the 10-year teacher would remain.)
2. Endorsement in area of assignment.
3. Number of endorsements.
4. Category assignment.
5. Total years of service in the district.
6. Total years of service in education.
7. Date the Board of Education approved the present contract.
8. Superintendent's decision — *Omaha, Nebr.*

The Separation of Administrators

"Reducing the number of administrators requires the same procedures and effort as reducing teachers — only more so. . ." said a superintendent in responding to the survey for this report. Facetious or not, it is true that the steps for teacher separation also apply to the reduction of principals and other supervisors.

Districts can use the following questions to guide them in evaluating or revising their procedures for separating administrators:

1. Does the district have a written policy for the reduction in force of administrators?
2. Is the policy in harmony with state law?
3. Is it in harmony with court decisions affecting administrators?
4. Is it in harmony with the district's negotiated contracts?
5. Do district procedures allow sufficient ad-

vance notice of board decisions to separate administrators?

6. Does the district provide clear and legal reasons for the separation?
7. Does the district have provisions for hearings and reasonable procedures for conducting them?
8. Can the district assure all parties concerned that impending separation is made in good faith, in accordance with law and with no taint of subterfuge?
9. Are the terms used in discussions and hearings clearly defined: What is seniority? What is experience? What is efficiency? What is certification? What is meant by "overall qualifications"? What is continuous service? What is competence?
10. Is the district prepared to follow the board policy and procedures in any and all cases involving the impending separation of administrators?
11. Does the district take every possible precaution to see that the board itself — and no one else — makes each decision with regard to separations?
12. Does the board policy provide for: the employment of the administrators in the district at another level or at reduced rank, the methods of recall and possible reappointment to a position of equal rank and pay?

Cautions

Court dockets are full of cases initiated by administrators threatened with reduction in force for several reasons: Even in instances where the board has a policy, for example, the aggrieved party charges it was not followed scrupulously. Or, even where an administrator is given notice of separation, the notice may be faulty because it does not contain specific reasons for the impending separation. Or, it was not sent within a reasonable time in advance of the termination date. Or, where hearings were conducted, they were allegedly conducted in an arbitrary or slipshod manner.

Administrators frequently take their cases to court alleging: (1) that the district had no clear definition of seniority or competence; that it was the administrator, not the board, who made the decision for reduction; or (3) that personal feelings, prejudice and artifice, not law or policy, ruled in the layoff process.

Sample Policy: Fort Worth, Tex.

The following policy from Fort Worth, Tex., incorporates both seniority provisions and "bumping" rights:

When it is necessary to reduce the number of administrative personnel at the local school level, the persons with the least system seniority in the affected areas will be the ones displaced. The following order for this reduction will prevail: deans, vice principals, principals.

An elementary principal who is reduced from his/her present position will be placed on the teacher seniority list in the area in which he/she was in the classroom according to his/her years of experience in the district.

A secondary school principal who is to be reduced from his/her present position will displace the secondary vice principal with the least system seniority.

A secondary vice principal who is reduced from his/her present position will be placed on the teacher seniority list in the area in which he/she was in the classroom according to his/her years of experience in the district.

A dean who is reduced from his/her position will be placed on the teacher seniority list in his/her certification areas according to his/her years of experience in the district.

Sample Policy: Hampton City, Va.

The Hampton City, Va., policy cited below favors seniority in determining layoffs. Note, too, that it differentiates between administrative and supervisory experience for the purpose of reassignment:

In the event that an administrative, supervisory or coordinating position to which the staff member was assigned at the time of reduction is abolished, notification of termination of position will be given to the staff member(s) with the lowest seniority in that position(s) in the Hampton City Schools. Should two staff members have been appointed to the same category of position on the same date, the staff member with more service of full-time employment in the Hampton City Schools would be considered senior.

Administrative reassignment will be determined on the basis of total number of years of administrative experience in the Hampton City Schools. Supervisory experience in the case of an administrator who had been previously assigned to such a position in the Hampton City Schools will be considered separate from administrative experience. Such ex-

An Expert Takes the Stand

Robert E. Phay, University of North Carolina, has studied scores of court decisions growing out of reduction in force cases. He has summed up his findings in *Reduction in Force: Legal Issues and Recommended Policy*. The 54-page monograph has been acclaimed not only for its scholarship but also for the wisdom that Phay demonstrates as he draws conclusions from his study. Some examples:

Distinguishing the difference: Understand the difference between a discharge for cause and a reduction in force. Discharge for cause is based on a personal inadequacy or failing of the teacher. Causes for discharge common to most state statutes include incompetence, neglect of duty, insubordination, noncompliance with school laws, immorality and conviction for specified crimes. When the school seeks to terminate employment for one of these reasons, it has a heavy procedural burden to meet. The termination of employment because of necessary reduction in force, on the other hand, is brought about not by a personal failure on the teacher's part but because of some external factor, like reduced enrollment or financial exigency.

Strict seniority not advisable: In the absence of statutory or contract limitations, a governing board should strongly *resist* applying a strict seniority rule in determining whom to lay off because a strict seniority rule can work in several ways against the basic school objective of providing the best educational system. Sometimes recently employed teachers are more competent, have more enthusiasm and can respond better to student needs than teachers who are their senior. Furthermore, most schools have recently added — often after much effort and expense — minority group teachers who have little seniority. A RIF policy based solely on seniority will mean discharging these recent hires.

Dismissal notice — its hazards: Some school boards are giving notice in the spring to more teachers than they otherwise would in order not to be stuck with unneeded teachers the following fall if enrollments drop below school estimates. This practice of overestimating the losses is an understandable but unfortunate aspect of retrenchment. It creates great anxiety among probationary teachers who have to live with the pink slip in the spring and hoped-for reemployment the following fall.

School attorney's role: To avoid unnecessary litigation and possible reversal of board action over the proper role of the board attorney, it is wise to separate the prosecutional and adjudicatory functions at the hearing. Therefore, it's a good idea for the superintendent to present the case for RIF while the board attorney serves as a law officer at the hearing, answering questions and giving advice to the board.

Note: Too long for inclusion here is Phay's "model RIF procedure," which has been described as the most useful part of the monograph.

For a copy of *Reduction in Force: Legal Issues and Recommended Policy*, write National Organization on Legal Problems in Education (NOLPE), 5401 Southwest Seventh Ave., Topeka, Kans. 66606; $6.95.

perience can be applied toward a supervisory position which that administrator may have held previously in the employ of the Hampton City Schools.

Supervisory reassignment will be determined on the basis of total number of years of supervisory experience in the Hampton City Schools. Administrative experience in the case of a supervisor who had been previously assigned to such a position in the Hampton City Schools will be considered separate from supervisory experience. Such experience can be applied toward an administrative position which that supervisor may have held previously in the employ of the Hampton City Schools.

When schools are closed due to declining enrollments or any other reason, the principal(s) with the lowest seniority in that position may be assigned to an assistant principalship(s) for which certification is held. . . .

No one will be reassigned to a position for which he or she is not certified and qualified. The superintendent of schools shall promulgate administrative guidelines for the implementation of this policy.

What Teachers Want; What a District Can Give

Information . . . Participation . . . Protection

These are the things teachers in districts affected by declining enrollment want from their employers. While no district can provide the full measure of protection teachers and their local unions demand, administrators can provide ample doses of information and opportunities for participation.

To do so should pay off in a lessening of rumors, fears, doubts, allegations of bad faith, subterfuge — and possible litigation. To do so should pay off in better teacher morale — or at least as good as possible under adverse conditions.

Provide information: Keep teachers and their organizations informed of changes in total population, total school enrollments, as well as breakdowns in enrollments in elementary and secondary schools, number of births, private school enrollments. Make certain that teacher leaders are familiar with the projections you have made of future enrollments, of changes in neighborhood residential and industrial patterns, of the costs of operating schools not used to capacity. Provide teachers with ample copies of studies made by citizen groups and planning task forces.

Tip: Set aside an inservice day (or part of a day) to review (1) the long- and short-range impacts of declining enrollments and (2) when timely, the entire reduction in force situation.

Provide opportunities for participation: This is a must. Teachers should be represented on all groups, commissions, task forces or committees appointed by the board to study the impact of declining enrollment. Their voices should be heard when the board considers policies on school closings, reorganization and reduction of programs and offerings and, above all, during board deliberations on policies on reduction in force.

Teachers want to be consulted; they want opportunities to offer their views and ideas. The prudent administrator will use informal and formal, official and unofficial means for involving teachers in meeting the challenges of declining enrollments.

Provide protection: "I can live without the information and the participation," said a president of a local teacher union during an interview. "Just give us the security."

Teachers and their leaders will, of course, fight layoffs to the best of their abilities. But they will accept the need for reducing staff if they are convinced that the layoffs are indeed inescapable; that they are administered under law and legal contracts; that they are handled fairly and with compassion; and that all possible measures to prevent drastic staff reductions have been considered or already taken.

Teachers may not be impressed with the administration's arguments that staff reductions are necessary for the good of the school programs — although it will never hurt to stress that a school system must do unpleasant things to save the educational programs and even public education itself.

They may be impressed with the evidence that reduction in force steps are not used to dismiss what some administrators would call "problem" teachers who could not otherwise be fired, nor to dismiss teachers for exercising their constitutional rights, such as free speech or academic freedom.

In their reach for protection, teachers and their organizations want proof that the school district is relying on attrition to reduce the severity of layoffs. And they often want:

- Evidence that the district is keeping a sufficient number of teachers to bring about smaller classes, where essential, and to improve instruction in special areas.
- Evidence that the district is encouraging early retirement and long-range leave policies — with no questions asked or explanations required.

A SAMPLER OF RIF POLICIES

The sample policies below are not presented as "models" to be copied by a district. While they have served well the districts which have developed and adopted them, they may not be suited for another district — in fact, probably cannot, because of different local conditions.

Chuck Noland, assistant general counsel of New Mexico's State Department of Education, has warned school authorities about taking over "model" policies. He said: "The principal drawback of adopting a policy developed elsewhere arises from the seductive power of a 'model' to standardize thinking and preempt other, and perhaps better ways of approaching the RIF problem in light of prevailing local conditions and attitudes. . . . A school board which uncritically adopts a policy developed elsewhere runs a substantial risk of finding that policy unsuitable when the crunch comes — by which time the board is stuck with it."

Nevertheless, it is useful to examine sample policies for ideas regarding content and methods of presentation. Consider the items below:

Montgomery County, Md.: RIF Procedures

Authority/Definition

The Board of Education of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) retains the right to reduce its forces, and its decision on such reduction is not subject to the grievance procedure.

Reduction of professional staff shall mean that the termination of a unit member(s) will occur because of one or more of the following reasons: decrease in student enrollment, changes in curriculum, decline in subject or grade level enrollment or budget limitations.

Procedure

If any reduction in personnel within any given field of instruction is necessary, the determination of those who are to be released will be in the following order: unit members holding Class II certificates, nontenured unit members holding provisional certificates, nontenured unit members holding regular certificates and tenured unit members.

When a reduction in professional staff is necessary, a unit member's length of service in MCPS and quality of job performance will receive equal consideration in determining those individuals who will be terminated. Among additional factors to be considered will be the competency of the teacher as related to the program needs of the school.

In fiscal year 1982, seniority will be given additional weight for unit members with six or more years of service with MCPS, unless individuals with demonstrably superior qualities are available for the positions.

Recall

- Any unit member whose service has been terminated because of the elimination of a position or a reduction in professional staff shall for a period of two years receive priority consideration for reemployment if he/she so desires and if appropriate vacancies develop.
- In the event that a unit member does not desire at the time of termination to be placed on the list for priority consideration for reemployment, he/she shall receive full payment for all earned unused leave. For those terminated unit members with tenure, they will receive, in addition, one month's salary for each year of creditable service up to a limit of six months' salary.

Leave Without Pay

Any unit member who is terminated due to a reduction in force may be placed on leave without pay for the six months immediately following the end of duty and may choose to continue membership in the health benefit plans offered by the Board of Education by paying the full cost of membership in the plans during those six months.

Rockingham County Schools, Harrisonburg, Va.: Staff Reduction

From time to time, it may become necessary to reduce professional personnel because of shifting population, reduced birth rate, etc. When a school's population is reduced, an effort will be made to maintain the overall pupil-teacher ratio between the limits of 20-25 to 1. When a school's ratio gets below the lower limit, serious consideration will be given to reducing the professional personnel assigned to that school. In such an event, the following policy will be followed on a systemwide basis:

1. Tenured professional personnel (including teachers, administrators and central office personnel) will receive preference over nontenured professional personnel.

2. Among nontenured professional personnel, a "last-in, first-out" policy will be the general rule. In the event the "last-in" person(s) was/were employed at a time when multiple hiring took place (as during the summer), the last dated agreement will be considered as the "last-in."

3. Among relatively equally qualified tenured personnel in the field(s) of certification involved, those with the greatest length of service in the Rockingham County school system shall receive preference.

4. Special projects or special programs may be given favorable consideration in some cases, if the project or program is meeting a critical need identified as unique for that school. In such an instance the next person in line may be released.

5. Serious effort will be made to transfer professional personnel thus removed from a staff to other vacancies in the county if they are properly endorsed.

6. In the event no vacancies exist in the area of a teacher's endorsement, the teacher will automatically be placed on sabbatical leave of absence for one year without pay and without guarantee of reassignment. However, it is anticipated that every effort will be made during that time to place the teacher in a mutually satisfactory position.

7. Any teacher to be released by this policy will be notified by the division superintendent after two weeks' notice in writing and opportunity to be heard.

8. In the event the structure of teaching personnel is reduced by as many as 25 to 50, one instructional supervisor may be removed from the central office staff and returned to a teaching position vacated by such reductions.

9. The division superintendent will make the appropriate reports and explanations of all professional personnel reductions at the next meeting of the school board.

Washington Elementary District, Phoenix, Ariz.: Staff Reduction

In the event a reduction in the teaching staff is necessary, such reduction will be based upon districtwide length of service, certification and teaching experience. Before a recommendation is made to the board as to the size and location of the staff reduction, the teachers association shall be informed. Affected teachers shall be notified when the board takes action.

- Districtwide length of service will be defined as the total length of service with the district. Service shall begin from the date of board action employing the teacher. In the event employment dates are the same, the date of interview will be used.
- Teaching experience will be defined as the teacher's actual experience in terms of subjects taught and the grade level at which the experience took place.

Teachers shall be laid off in inverse order, based on districtwide length of service. In no case shall a continuing teacher be laid off while a probationary teacher is retained to render service in a given position which a continuing teacher is certificated and has the experience necessary to render service in that position.

Teachers laid off shall be recalled in the inverse order in which they were laid off provided that they are certificated and experienced in that area in which a vacancy occurs or a new position is created.

In the event a teacher is recalled, he must report for duty within five working days after having received notification of recall or within five working days from which the position becomes open, whichever is later. If the above guidelines are not met, the next eligible teacher will be recalled to fill the opening.

All persons released by need of staff reduction shall receive a letter from the school district stating that the loss of their position was due only to staff reduction.

A list of staff released shall be maintained at the personnel office. Released staff shall have an opportunity, upon application, to fill substitute requests and shall receive consideration not less than equal to other substitutes.

Waterford, Mich.: Part-Time Teaching

Waterford, Mich., is one of many school districts offering teachers part-time employment because of declining enrollment. Here is how the district's director of personnel announced the plan:

The administration of the Waterford Schools will consider teachers for part-time teaching assignments for the coming school year. This is due to the number of teachers who will be laid off next year because of declining enrollment and financial problems. We would like to keep as many teachers working as possible and, at the same time, provide a good educational program for students.

To be considered for part-time teaching, a teacher should join with a partner and submit a plan for working together to a principal. The plan should include, but not be limited to, the following considerations.:

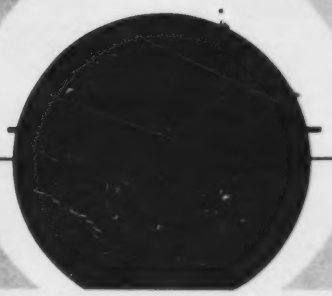
- Who makes up the partnership.
- When each partner will teach.
- How the curriculum will be divided.
- When joint planning will take place.
- How noon duty will be handled.
- Whether or not you agree to attend afternoon workshops, even if not scheduled to work in the afternoon.
- How parent-teacher conferences will be handled.

Teachers pairing with a partner to make a full-time teaching assignment must work very closely together in planning the educational programs for their students. The principal of the school must also be deeply involved and must give his/her approval.

If any of you definitely want to be considered for a part-time teaching position, please discuss this with your principal. If he/she agrees, send a letter to me stating the conditions under which you would definitely consider part-time employment and if you have a partner and plan. Your principal should send his/her approval to me also.

Chapter VIII

Program and Curriculum



Concerned citizens, serving on long-range planning committees, may see the results of declining enrollments more sharply than do busy school administrators and school boards. Citizens often see the slow contraction of educational services and speak of "erosion of educational quality," or use similar euphemisms.

What happens — or what can happen — in school districts where declining enrollments do not arouse school authorities or the people to act decisively are changes in instructional programs such as these:

At the secondary school level: Some electives are eliminated .... Some classes are offered in alternate years .... Teachers are called upon to teach outside their major areas of preparation .... Different levels of foreign languages, math and science are taught at the same time by the same teacher .... Activity programs are curtailed, eliminated or impaired .... Programs not falling into the "basics" category are reduced or eliminated, including driver education, drama, forensics and music competition .... Also reduced or impaired are staff inservice and the use of teacher aides ....

At the elementary school level: An increasing number of teachers are shared among buildings .... Teacher ability to meet student needs is decreased .... Elementary schools experience increased difficulty in providing individualized instruction in basic subjects .... More teachers are required to teach all subjects to students ranging over two or three grade levels .... Teacher efficiency is decreased as diversity of assignments increases ....

Yet, "adversity often can be turned into gain," said a staff report of the Englewood (Colo.) Public Schools, after studying these and other effects of declining enrollments. But the options for making sweet uses of adversity lie first in reorganization of grade structures. Fewer students and closed schools suggest to administrators that the first thing to examine is the district's grade structure and to seek new patterns suitable for local conditions.

There are probably a dozen ways to arrange and group grades — from use of an educational park where all grades would be housed in clusters of buildings, to individual schools in various parts of the community housing, for example, grades K-6, 7-8, 9-12 or K-5, 6-8, 9-12.

"Most organizational formats, properly implemented, can promote a quality educational program," said Lawrence Heyerdahl, superintendent of Bartholomew Consolidated School Corporation, Columbus, Ind. His view was supported by his staff after a grade level study. Other administrators reiterate, "there is no one best grade structure."

Nevertheless, the era of declining enrollments has brought new emphasis to the middle school and the four year high school.

Middle Schools Gain

The middle school concept is riding high in all parts of the nation. In Columbus, Ohio, the middle school idea first gathered momentum in 1978. Citizens taking part in a long-range planning project supported the middle school above all other patterns of organization. On the basis of citizen endorsement, the Columbus Board of Education directed the administration to develop "a reorganization of the school system beginning in September 1980, with K-5 in elementary schools, 6-8 in middle schools and 9-12 in high schools."

Supt. Joseph Davis has fully accepted the middle school concept.

"When we talked to people from other school districts which have converted junior high schools to middle schools, we discovered that middle schools have proven potential for helping students at a distinctive stage of their development.

"In school systems without middle schools, we ask sixth graders to go from a self-contained classroom with one teacher to a school where classes change every 43 minutes, with a different teacher each period in a different classroom," Davis said. "All this at a time when students are beginning to experience major physical and emotional changes! It's no wonder that problems increase and test scores plummet to the lowest they will ever be during students' 13 years of schooling.

"In middle schools, there'll be no bell clanging every 43 minutes with 400 to 900 students pushing their way through bustling hallways," the Columbus superintendent noted. "For the most part, sixth-grade students will stay in one classroom for most of the day and receive instruction in reading, language arts, social studies, math, health and science. Seventh graders will have two or more academic teachers located in different rooms. Eighth graders will have five teachers per day and will change classes much as they do now in junior high.

"Thus, middle schools provide a gradual transition from the self-contained elementary classroom to the nine-period departmentalized day in high school — from the child-centered elementary school to the subject-centered high school," Davis explained.

Overall, Davis believes that middle schools are educationally and financially sound. "I don't consider them to be a panacea. But the middle school is organized in such a way that more teachers can discover the correct ways to teach young adolescents."

Englewood's Choice: Middle Schools

After Englewood, Colo., staff members had considered several options for grade reorganization, they chose the pattern which included grades 6, 7 and 8 as middle schools. Staff members had become disillusioned with the Englewood junior high schools, taking up the familiar charge that "junior high schools are no more than little high schools." The middle schools, the staff reported to the Board of Education, are designed to serve as transitional schools and, more importantly, "to meet the needs of the young adolescent."

Englewood educators presented to the board the comparison in the box commonly used to distinguish between the middle school and the junior high school.

The staff also stressed to the board that the middle school concept, when properly developed, will lead young adolescents toward exploration of new ideas, facts and career information; will assure a smooth transition to secondary school life; and will help develop positive self-concepts in youngsters.

Such at least is the theory behind the middle

Distinguishing the Middle School from the Junior High School

Middle School Emphasis:	Junior High School Emphasis:
A child-centered program.	A subject-centered program.
Learning how to learn.	Learning a body of information.
Belief in oneself.	Mastery of concepts and skills.
Student self-direction, under expert guidance.	Competition with others.
Student responsibility for learning.	Adherence to teacher-made lesson plans.
Student independence.	Teacher responsibility for student learning.
Flexible scheduling.	Teacher control.
Student planning in scheduling.	The six-period day.
Variable group sizes.	The principal-made schedule.
Team teaching.	Standard classrooms.
A self pacing approach, with students learning at different rates.	One teacher for each subject.
Mastery of concepts and skills.	A textbook approach, with all students on the same page at the same time.

school. Practical educators know that the concept is not self-operating. Only teachers can make it happen, and most teachers need help — in the form of inservice development — to bring the middle school concept to life.

Inservice: What To Include

To introduce the middle schools, Columbia Heights, Minn., studied the type of actions needed to make the concept a success. Inservice preparation was first on the list. As part of such staff development activities, Columbia Heights listed as desirable:

- Visits by teachers and administrators to neighboring school districts where middle schools were successfully operated.
- Workshops led by experts in middle school philosophy and procedures.
- Lectures and institutes dealing with psychology of learning for students in the 11-14 age range.

In all, Columbia Heights educators adhered to the principles that at least two years of preparation should precede the introduction of middle schools; that the board of education as well as administrators should be "exposed" to the middle school concept; and that staff committees should be at work throughout the preparatory period developing programs and materials for instruction in middle schools.

Hail the Four Year High School

"With so much attention being focused on the new middle schools," said Supt. Davis of Columbus, Ohio, "we should not overlook the fact that there are several advantages to moving ninth graders into the high schools."

One of these advantages, according to Davis, is that the ninth grade schedule is already similar to a high school schedule, and the whole program can be rather easily transferred. Actually, ninth grade is the first year of high school, and students begin earning credits toward graduation. Placing all four high school grades in the same building gives students a greater opportunity to sign up for courses that would not be available to them at the junior high level and to take advantage of the high school's more extensive instructional facilities.

Other advantages of the 9-12 high school were cited by the secondary school faculty of the Englewood, Colo., schools. They said:

> "The establishment of a four year high school could provide many new options in maintaining and improving a comprehensive program at the high school. A grade 9-12 high school program would allow many students to take the majority of basic required courses during the first two years of high school. This would permit the offering of more electives during the junior and senior years. The last two years could be devoted to more effectively preparing students for the years following graduation, i.e., better college preparatory or vocational offerings.
>
> "Continuity of program would be enhanced especially in English, mathematics, science, business education and foreign language. By including the ninth grade in the senior high program, coordination, continuity and articulation would be improved.
>
> "A comprehensive high school, which would occur with the addition of the ninth grade, would allow improved opportunities for both the low and high achievers because of the increased diversity of teaching skills and styles represented, and because of substantial increases in program offerings. High-achieving ninth graders could, if necessary or desirable, take additional credit courses each semester, thereby creating an opportunity for greater specialization or exploration in the eleventh and twelfth grades. Additional staff would also permit more remedial instruction in reading and math at all secondary grade levels."

Four year high schools could serve unmet needs: The searing effects of decline can help give districts a four year high school which would improve conditions for traditional clientele — the youth of the community — and expand clientele by responding to unmet educational needs of the community.

That optimistic view comes from David Russell, superintendent of the Gardner (Mass.) Public Schools. Russell believes that a four year high school, uncrowded but run as a tight ship, can have the space and resources for mini-schools, offering alternative programs for those who need them without having to set up educational activities in another part of town. The high school would also have space and resources for direct attention to potential dropouts and to those who are "severely developmentally disabled."

As for the "unmet needs of the community," consider Gardner's view:

"The notion that the high school should serve only 14- to 18-year-olds is long gone. But most of the adults the high school has served in the past have been evening 'drop-ins.' Now in a number of communities, adults are coming to school during the day

as well as evenings and weekends, and the high school has taken down its sign, 'For children only; come back later.'

"These new clients will have a variety of needs and expectations. In some communities adults are being admitted to regular high school courses on a space-available basis or, if the demand is great enough, new sections are formed.

"Special classes may also be set up to prepare for high school equivalency tests and to cater to the adult who never attended high school and the dropout who has decided that a diploma is worth something after all."

Case Study: Spotlight on Education and People

Teaching and learning, students and teachers, may get short shrift in the turmoil of decline and school closures.

Not so in Birmingham, Mich., despite massive problems of decline.

At peak enrollment in 1967-68, Birmingham enrolled 17,500 students in 25 schools — two senior high schools, five middle schools and 18 elementary schools. By 1980-81, the student population had declined to 9,200 students.

Schools were closed in three stages. Starting in 1972, one elementary school was closed; in 1975-76, two elementary and one middle school were closed; in 1980-81, five elementary schools were closed.

A five-year projection indicates that more schools will be closed, since by 1985 Birmingham may have only 6,900 students.

In the midst of school closings, Birmingham officials have paid close attention to instructional goals and educational improvement of the system. In 1980, when the board reported its long-range plans to the community on changes that will be required as a result of further declining enrollments, it emphasized its instructional goals. Without ranking their importance, the board agreed on 10 goals:

- Self-worth — "to provide experience which will help each student accept himself as a worthy member of society."
- Basic skills.
- Opportunities to provide broad educational experiences in vocational and academic areas.
- Humanism.
- Relevance — "to develop understanding of social problems relevant to today's world."
- Personalization.
- Citizenship.
- Health.
- Culture.
- Change — "to foster a desire for continuous learning and prepare for a world of change."

Going a step beyond instructional goals, the board also stressed the overriding importance of personalization and staff development.

Personalization: When schools are closed or consolidated, teachers are dismissed, the school dollar shrinks and student needs are in danger of neglect. To prevent such a consequence, the Birmingham Board of Education placed the weight of its authority on a goal it called "personalization." This is intended to recognize that there are different learning and teaching styles. To carry out this goal, the board pledged to:

Maintain a minimum of two teachers per grade to allow for options in student placement where possible ... maintain open enrollments ... maintain alternative education alongside traditional programs ... reduce class size, especially in K-3 ... expand guidance and counseling services to the elementary grades ... provide a media center and specialist for each school ... offer programs in art, music and physical education ... set up plans in each school for early identification of students who might require remedial services or programs of acceleration and enrichment.

Staff development: This districtwide goal emphasizes an expanded inservice program to "keep both teachers and subject matter updated." This is necessary, the board said, because knowledge is rapidly increasing and insight into the learning process is changing. The board also committed itself to a personnel evaluation system to improve staff performance.

Case Study: Smaller High Schools — Just the Thing?

Enrollment decline was rapid in the Livonia (Mich.) Public Schools. Over a decade, enrollment fell 42 percent — from a peak of 38,500 students in 1970-71 to 22,500 in 1980-81. Between 1977, when the district felt the sharpest impact of decline, and 1981, it closed 13 of its 36 grade schools and 6 of its 10 junior high schools.

The district is now struggling with the next phase — deciding the future of four senior high schools. Originally, these housed 2,000 students each in grades 10-12. As declines began, reported Supt. George G. Garver, the administration moved ninth graders from the junior high schools to the senior

What Research Says

Some Instructional Effects of Declining Enrollment

A survey of 95 school districts in all parts of the country in 1978-79 showed that the effects of declining enrollment on instructional programs were positive in some instances, negative in others.

Some school districts used enrollment declines as an opportunity to reexamine goals, eliminate outdated courses, restructure grade organization patterns and improve instruction. Other districts did not.

Other survey findings showed that: (1) As enrollment declined, fewer students were found in academic course subjects. Classes in foreign languages, science and social studies were the main "losers." (2) Student membership in vocational courses remained stable in all districts, without regard to enrollment trends — up or down.

The investigators also found that districts with declining enrollment:

- Continued to use educational innovations, even though "seed money" for developing and introducing new methods was not available. Declining districts used team teaching and alternative education approaches and tried to keep up with individualized instructional efforts.
- Experienced a higher drop-out rate than districts with increasing enrollments.
- Were hiring teachers capable of teaching in more than one area.
- And, finally, they were using their instructional materials for longer periods of time — sometimes to the point of obsolescence.

The threat to instructional quality: Reflecting on their findings some time after their research project was completed, the investigators decided that "declining enrollments are beginning to take their toll on instructional programs." They cautioned administrators to be aware of the negative impact that declining enrollments have on language arts, social studies, foreign languages and fine arts.

"These subject areas lose out in several ways, including the number of courses taught, staff assigned to teach these courses and actual student enrollments," said the researchers, Frederick L. Dembowski of the State University of New York, Albany, and Geneva Gay of Purdue University.

Dembowski and Gay were especially concerned about the shrinking of social studies offerings. "Why?" they asked. Social studies, they replied, are regarded in many school districts as "innovations." Furthermore, they noted, school authorities are dropping them in favor of "traditional curriculum designs": history, geography, civics.

"Whatever the reasons for the declines in various instructional areas, the effect on students is the same: reduction of educational options available to students in academic and fine arts courses. As enrollment declines, school districts will be more prone to 'homogenize' their instructional programs. To the extent that districts restrict their offerings to the 'basics,' they also restrict their ability to accommodate individual differences and to offer high-quality educational opportunities."

The study, *Effects of Declining Enrollments on Instructional Programs*, was sponsored by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. A duplicated copy of the text of the report is available from ASCD, 225 N. Washington St., Alexandria, Va. 22314. (Price $7.50. Payment must accompany order.)

high schools. "This was done to provide an adequate number of students for maintenance of a diversity of programs and other offerings which are important to a comprehensive high school," Garver said.

As Livonia school officials look at their enrollment projections, they estimate that by 1990 enrollment may be as low as 13,500. In that case, each of the high school buildings will house no more than 1,000 students.

The question before Livonia is whether to close one or two high school buildings, or to continue with four buildings with the smaller enrollments. Can a small high school serve students adequately?

Visits to small high schools: To get a firsthand view of how small high schools function, Garver organized five teams of central office staff and dispatched them to five relatively small Michigan districts, with high schools of under 1,000. The staff teams reported these observations:

- The smaller high schools exhibited an intimate, relaxed and cordial environment. There was little need for intensive supervision of lunchrooms, corridors, study halls or rest room areas. Principals and teachers for the most part knew the students by name.

- Despite the size, there was a breadth of program offerings in the smaller high schools. Nearly all teachers were teaching in their major field of preparation. Some courses were offered on an every-other-year basis. This allowed students on a four year cycle to plan ahead, and thereby the administration could count on a sufficient number of students in a given year to offer advanced courses.

Planning for smallness: As Livonia continues to consider the fate of its high schools, smallness begins to appear attractive. This implies that the district might keep its four high schools, with diminshed enrollments, but by no means diminished program offerings. For example, advanced courses which appeal to a small number of students could be offered by locating them at perhaps only one of the four senior high schools. One high school could, possibly, become the center for advanced foreign languages; others could become centers for advanced science, humanities or performing arts. Students who wished to take these advanced courses would spend a portion of their school day at the high school offering the subjects.

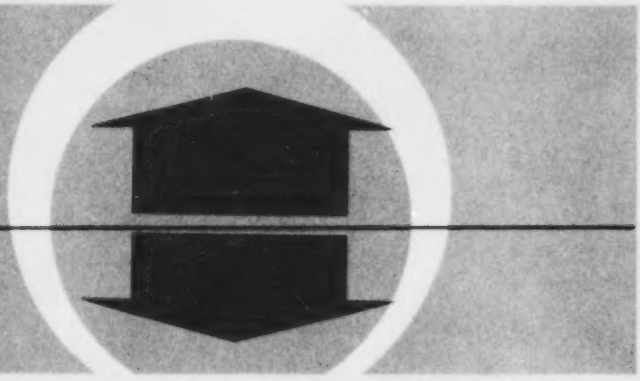
"By making transportation available between our four high schools," Garver said, "we would facilitate this type of programmatic offering."

As this report was going to press, plans were still under study. But evidence was emerging for Livonia that, as one staff member put it, "we might have the best of two worlds."

Garver explained: "We may not have strong program reasons for the automatic closing of one of the senior high schools as our secondary enrollment continues to decline. We can probably maintain the desirable elements of a smaller high school complex without losing the advantages of a larger high school program. If we treat our senior high school program as a district program, we would have a student body of never less than 4,000 students in grades 9-12. This is a sufficient number to allow offering virtually all courses that we now offer or may contemplate offering in the future. Obviously, however, the district cannot afford to run all programs at all four locations."

Chapter IX

Finance



The fact that a district has fewer pupils to teach and serve will not of itself result in an automatic and immediate cache to help pay its operating costs.

Nor can a district depend for much continual financial help from the sale, rental or lease of vacant school space.

Inflation and the rise in costs for essential school services and materials may nullify any expectations of quick relief from these two factors.

Most administrators know these facts to be true. A large number of people in many districts, however, neither understand nor are willing to accept these basic concepts regarding school finance.

The financial pressure on most school districts is so severe that no quick or short-range approaches will bring much relief. Declining enrollments serve to put the spotlight on the deep-seated and persistent problems of school finance.

To cope with the shortage of funds and to stay alive as a school district, administrators are employing a host of measures, as shown in the checklist in this chapter.

Taking some or most of the steps in the checklist may not ensure financial success or survival. Yet, it is important to reach for these measures. They may save *some* money. They may also prove to the people that the district is doing all it can to save school dollars. That has value.

During the rest of this decade, public education will have to depend on the local taxpayer and school patron as never before.

In turn, this means that public education authorities will have to woo the taxpayer and school patron as never before. The wooing will be carried out best by:

- Providing the best possible educational programs for the children of the district. This is first and foremost.
- Helping the people understand the problems of

Why Does Less Cost More?

Community members often ask, "Why does it take more money to educate fewer students?"

When that question is asked of Supt. Joseph Davis, Columbus (Ohio) Public Schools, he draws on several replies:

"Everything costs more these days, and education is no exception. Unfortunately for the Columbus Public Schools, we have no built-in provisions to keep pace with skyrocketing inflation, and so the gap between what we need and what we receive widens each passing month. . . We're still falling behind. Declining enrollment has helped trim total costs, but the rate of decline has been much less than the rate of inflation. That's why it costs more to educate fewer pupils."

"A good analogy is buying a new car. Ten years ago, you could buy a full-sized automobile for $4,000. Today, you pay twice as much for a car that's only half as big. Even if we could reduce school expenditures by the same percentage as enrollment decline — which we can't — we still would fall short of the funds needed to just keep up with inflation."

the schools.

- Helping the people understand the reasons that "less will cost more."

A take-off point in these efforts is to take the community into complete confidence regarding the financial crunch caused by declining enrollments.

One superintendent who has done this with success is Jack R. Anderson, East Ramapo Public Schools, Spring Valley, N.Y. He printed a detailed, attractive *Budget Report for 1980-81*. In addition to a myriad of facts about the district's budget, this brochure gave residents a comprehensive explanation of "why the budget goes up though enrollment goes down."

Nearly all of this statement is reproduced here with marginal comment. It is the kind of information that a district can adapt for its purposes, to suit local conditions.

East Ramapo's Explanation: 'Why the Budget Goes Up Though Enrollment Goes Down'

Inflation: This is one main reason. But while it hits all taxpayers hard, its greatest impact is on school budgets. The reason is that the very goods and services which are rising fastest in cost—such as gasoline, heating oil and paper — are those on which school districts are most dependent. One illustration: Soaring gasoline expenses are primarily responsible for a budget increase of $625,110 for pupil transportation, of which $454,433 is due to higher costs for busing.

Bond issue payments: School construction programs, paid for over 20- and 30-year periods, are another reason. In 1952-53, East Ramapo housed 2,198 students in four schools. By 1970-71, the peak enrollment year, 20 schools were needed to educate 16,687 students. Although enrollment is expected to dip below 13,000 in 16 schools next year, annual payments of more than $2.7 million in principal and interest on 15 school bond issues must continue to be included in each budget.

It is important to understand what both inflation and fixed debts mean in terms of cost per student in the face of declining enrollment. A popular but misleading indicator sometimes used in evaluating a school budget is to divide the total dollars by the number of students. *This so-called "per-pupil cost" goes up precisely because student enrollment goes down.* A brief look at a typical household — maybe even your own — shows why.

Overhead remains fixed: Let's say this household has two adults, two children and operating expenses of $10,000 per year, which includes

Implications for Other Districts

Provide your own examples of how essential costs of running the schools have risen. Cite the familiar but painful examples: heat, transportation, materials.

Not many citizens are aware of the payments that school officials have to make on the principal and interest of school bond issues. Here is an opportunity to provide detailed information.

mortgage, taxes, utility and phone bills, insurance and other normal maintenance costs. Now, if one child goes off to college or gets married, will your household operating expenses go down by one-fourth? Not a chance! Your mortgage will remain the same. Your taxes will remain the same (if you're lucky). And your utility and phone bills and other maintenance costs will probably remain about the same (assuming less usage but increasing rates).

Even if you decide to close off a room, and your operating costs can be slightly decreased, they will surely not decrease in proportion to the 25 percent reduction in resident population. As a result, the "per-person cost" of running your household would jump from $2,500 ($10,000 ÷ 4) to $3,333 ($10,000 ÷ 3). But you would certainly disagree with anyone who might suggest that you weren't managing your money carefully! The same holds true for declining enrollment: classrooms may be vacant, and schools may be closed, but reduced operating costs will never come close to equaling the percentage by which student population declines.

Possibly you can find a simple, down-to-earth metaphor to explain to the community why overhead costs remain fixed even though enrollment drops. Note the illustration Supt. Joseph Davis of Columbus, Ohio, uses (see the box on page 67).

"The cost of educating 22 students is about the same as that for educating 28 students." — Bureau of Educational Research, University of Denver.

Personnel costs: Another important, but often overlooked, factor contributing to higher budgets in a period of declining enrollment is in the area of personnel costs. Just as some arrive at a "per-pupil cost" and say it's too high, some compute an "average teacher salary" and say that's too high. But the average automatically goes up because enrollment drops.

Here's why: The least senior teachers are let go when a reduction in force is necessary. During the 1950s and 1960s, when student enrollment was skyrocketing, large numbers of teachers were hired, including many who were young and inexperienced, which placed them near the bottom of the salary scale. When student enrollment leveled off and began dropping in the early 1970s, the teachers dismissed as a result of declining enrollment were those with the least seniority (as required by state law).

The effect has been dramatic. Whereas the "average" teacher in 1970 had nine years'

Teacher salaries are often a target of vocal citizens. Explain how your own state laws and board policies affect the instructional staff and whether savings are possible in your district.

If Schools Close, What Happens to Property Values?

Small school districts have to think the unthinkable as they struggle to cope with the financial implications of enrollment decline. A case in point is Roselle (Ill.) School District No. 12. It serves a proud community with a history of good education. But its enrollment dropped from 1,280 students in 1974 to 600 students in 1981. In its struggle with dwindling numbers of students and reduced funds, the district closed two of its four schools. Still, the future looked grim. The board could see nothing ahead but deficits for the next few years.

After studying the problem, Supt. Dennis L. O'Connell arrived at "some bottom-line solutions." These included closing another school, raising the tax rate, and/or consolidation. "Consolidation with a neighboring district is a possibility. However, a majority of the voters in both districts must agree. Therefore, consolidation is at best a long-range possibility rather than an immediate solution to our problem," O'Connell said.

The superintendent then "assumed the worst": that the people would support neither the closing of a school nor an increased tax rate. Then, the unthinkable: The district would have to be dissolved, and students would have to go to other districts through forced consolidation.

O'Connell pointed out to the community that "your real estate values would decline — a community must have schools and good educational programs for home values to remain high." A case in point: Not so long ago, when the Rockford (Ill.) Public Schools discontinued athletic programs, property values fell immediately.

In a report, O'Connell said: "A citizen committee is presently studying the possibilities of consolidation with a neighboring district or a unit district with the high school. I do not expect this issue to be resolved in the near future. It will take from three to five years before any such action could be accomplished. Projections on district enrollment indicate a leveling at approximately 450 students in 1983-84. This means the district will have to RIF an additional four staff members over the next two years."

experience and a master's degree, the average teacher of today has 12 years' experience, a master's degree and 15 additional graduate credits. This has meant a major shift upward in the average salary. Coupled with inflation, declining enrollment and, in many instances, smaller class sizes, the average teacher salary clearly does not provide an accurate picture of the per-pupil cost.

More mandated programs: Still another reason for rising costs, despite declining enrollment, is the increase in the number of educational programs, courses and services offered. With the passage of Public Law 94-142 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act), school districts were required to provide a total educational program for all children with handicapping conditions. Along with other state and federally mandated programs, this has resulted in a wide variety of new

List all mandated programs your district is required to provide. Tell where the mandates come from and what burdens they place on the community.

programs for the gifted, those in need of remediation, and equal vocational and athletic opportunities for boys and girls.

Reduced state aid: State aid formulas differ in every state. Every superintendent knows to what extent state aid for his or her district is reduced because of reduced enrollment and attendance. But the people may not know it. Tell them.

Benefits up: Employee benefits are another key element in the rising cost of education. Fixed and prescribed by state and

A Checklist for School Districts: Measures for Financial Survival

Planning

- ☐ Board members and administrators make plans which include
  - _____ short-range measures
  - _____ long-range measures.
- ☐ They plan with
  - _____ citizen groups
  - _____ municipal officials.
- ☐ They anticipate expenditures and outlays as far ahead as possible.
- ☐ Their planning is continuous.

Improved Budgeting Practices

- ☐ They review their traditional budgeting procedures.
- ☐ They look for new methods in budgeting.

Savings in Personnel Costs

- ☐ They eliminate inefficient staff through strong evaluation plans.
- ☐ They apply reduction in force measures to:
  - _____ teachers
  - _____ department heads
  - _____ principals
  - _____ other administrators.
- ☐ They review and change teacher hiring practices.

Savings and Income Through Closures

- ☐ They dispose of inefficient school plants.
- ☐ They seek the largest possible income through sale, lease or rental of surplus property.

Economies Through Grade Reorganization

- ☐ They try different patterns of elementary grades.
- ☐ They take a new look at the middle grade structure.
- ☐ They set up four year high schools — large or small — that will provide the best education for the least money.

Economies Through Cooperation with Other Districts

- ☐ They participate in joint ventures in
  - _____ purchasing
  - _____ inservice education
  - _____ data processing
  - _____ vocational education
  - _____ special education
  - _____ media centers.
- ☐ When worst comes to worst, they consolidate districts.

Economies in Noninstructional Areas

- ☐ They apply cost-cutting measures in
  - _____ energy
  - _____ maintenance
  - _____ insurance
  - _____ transportation
  - _____ office practices.

Cuts in Programs (As a Last Resort)

- ☐ They increase class size.
- ☐ They set a minimum class size.
- ☐ They reduce extracurricular events, sports and atheltics programs.
- ☐ They reduce course offerings and student services.

Lobbying for State Aid

- ☐ They join with others to change and improve legislation and funding for local districts.

"In the state of Iowa, every time you lose a student you lose approximately $2,000 worth of budgeting capacity." — Supt. Roger A. Clough, Mason City (Iowa) Community Schools.

federal statutes, these benefits include professional and civil service retirement funds and Social Security. East Ramapo's contribution to the teacher retirement fund for 1980-81, for example, increased $336,262 — on top of an increase of $491,781 in 1979-80.

The same holds true in the area of Social Security, where continued large increases in the maximum taxable salary required the district to add $268,258 more to the 1980-81 budget — over and above the $323,192 needed in 1979-80. An additional $180,469 was being placed in this budget to cover rising workers compensation, health, medical and dental insurance costs.

Explain how employee benefits affect your school budget. Give examples, illustrations.

Summary: There are many reasons why educational costs continue to increase in the face of declining enrollment: unchecked inflation exerts an unrelenting pressure on even the leanest school budget; building program bonding and operating costs continue despite falling enrollments; salaries based on training, experience and seniority continue to rise, while staff reductions cannot keep pace with the decline in enrollment; more mandated educational programs and services force an increase in costs, often without the benefit of matching revenues; and fixed costs in the area of employee benefits are, to a large extent, subject to state and federal regulations.

This sumary is repetitious, but repetition is reinforcement. Tell and tell again.

For the Research Minded

One of the best bibliographies on declining enrollment reviewed for this report was prepared by the Rocky Mountain School Study Council's Commission on Decelerating Resources. It lists 26 research studies; 59 reports from associations, state departments of education and local school districts; and 51 other pieces of information.

To find out about the availability of this bibliography to nonmembers of the council, write to John C. Hefty, Executive Secretary, Rocky Mountain School Study Council, Bureau of Educational Research, University of Denver, Denver, Colo. 80208.

Note: The council's Commisson on Decelerating Resources was set up in 1979 "to focus on decelerating resources, a problem which involves the impact of enrollment decline, inflation and increasing costs of public education." The commission's goal is to develop strategies which districts might use to cope with decelerating resources for both the long and short range. While the emphasis will be on Rocky Mountain states, some of the strategies will have application in all parts of the country.

Chapter X

High Schools

"The closing, consolidation and even curtailing of secondary schools is an effort of enormous complexity — and for good reason: the complex variety of human factors you have to take into account. We have to consider and be sensitive to the deep concerns of many, many people.

"To start at the bottom — or is it the top? — there are the students, many of them articulate, deeply devoted to the school, immersed with school spirit. There are the parents, many of whom may have attended the high school while they were young. They are not only nostalgic about it, but are dedicated to its aims and programs. There are the alumni — many of them now in influential positions in the district, state and nation. You just can't put an end to, or even change, an institution to which distinguished personalities owe loyalty and appreciation for their careers.

"How many more individuals and groups need to be consulted and need to take part in deciding the fate of a high school? These, certainly: merchants in the district, the school booster clubs, the PTAs, the cheerleaders and the marching band members. And don't forget the zealous fans of the school's sports!

"But equally important, there are the influential teachers, many of whom are leaders in their community and in their profession. There are the coaches and the department chairmen, the counselors, the assistant principals and the principals themselves.

"We realize what a complex, human and sensitive organism a high school is once we begin talking about changing, curtailing, dismantling, closing or consolidating.

"What does this mean for the superintendent facing declining enrollment of secondary school students? I think it means applying all of the good lessons we have learned during the past decade in coping with elementary declines. And more. It means we have to show twice the patience, develop twice the intensity of public participation than during our trials with elementary school declines. We may possibly need longer periods of planning which, fortunately, we have time for now in most districts."

— Paul B. Salmon
Executive Director
AASA

Not how to close, but how to keep the high school open on a diminished scale will be the question before two-thirds of the nation's school superintendents in the next 5 to 10 years. They are the ones who have only one high school in their districts, and they may be looking toward the drop in enrollment either with anticipation or with concern.

For the overcrowded high school, fewer students may mean relief. It may mean — at last — space, faculty and resources for programs for the gifted, the troubled, the ones who require individualized attention, or those who can benefit from independent study and advanced academic subjects.

Among the "silver linings" mentioned by superintendents in response to the survey for this report were:

"More elbow room in the high school. . . . At last an opportunity to set up an expanded media center. . . . A chance to create a teacher center. . . . Improve our in-school suspension facility. . . . Give

our department heads some office space. . . . Provide better conditions for student counseling. . . ."

These are positive ways to use the new space which may become available to the high school. But the time for enjoying such benefits may not last long. Deeper and deeper cuts in student rolls may be in the offing for the district with a single high school as for all districts.

"There may be little time for complacency in the senior high school district," cautioned scores of respondents to the AASA survey. One advised: "Plan — while you have a little time." Another noted: "Now is the time to monitor the trends of the high school population."

According to the evidence in the AASA survey, superintendents in single high school districts plan to respond, or are already responding, to the enrollment decline in two ways:

1. By continuing to operate the high school almost the same as before, but taking advantage of the reduced number of students to enhance on-going programs. They and their communities are content with the direction and results of the high school, and welcome whatever relief from overcrowding the years ahead will bring.

2. By beginning a review of the high school's place in the community and holding plans in readiness, or in semi-readiness, to adjust the school to new conditions.

What superintendents in the second category do, depends, of course, on what their enrollment projections portend. The greater the threat of student shrinkage, the more thorough the reexamination of goals and the more intensive the preparation for the time when the high school classrooms will stand partially full or empty.

When representatives of six districts with a single high school were brought together in 1980 under the sponsorship of the National Institute of Education (NIE), they agreed that planning for the future can take place only as "the overriding questions have been answered." They said these questions are:

"What do we as a community want the high school to be in the next five years?

"What do we care most about?

"What do we want our children to learn in high school; what must they learn to be productive members of tomorrow's society?

"What is the best way for each of them to learn?

"What role do we want the high school to play in our community?

"Who will be the clients of public education in the future?"

The Educational Facilities Laboratories, in summing up the conclusions of the NIE conference, reported: "One of the most pragmatic strategies (if your single high school is a three year institution) may be to move the ninth grade in and create a four year high school.

"There is a political advantage to the reorganization from a three to a four year high school in that it is not very controversial. Often a district has wanted a four year high school, perhaps even had one in the past. . . . Junior high schools have never developed the loyalty that high schools and neighborhood elementary schools have among parents. . . ."

Creating a four year institution may be the only action a district with a single high school may need to take, at least if the enrollment drop is not too sharp. And there is no question: the creation, or the re-creation of the 9-12 school, is the most visible and the strongest educational trend of this decade. All indicators point to this trend continuing, even getting stronger, in the coming decade.

Other Solutions

A four year high school with half-empty classrooms does not solve the problem of decline. Other strategies than reorganization of grades are needed. Here is a variety of possibilities:

Working with Other Districts

Before attempting to use this strategy, administrators should check state law and school board policies to assure that both permit direct cooperation among districts for educational and administrative purposes. Then, district administrators should:

- Seek out the district or districts which have programs and resources that can be utilized on a shared basis.
- Start slowly, in a limited way.
- Consult legal counsel.
- Consult and confer with responsible officials in neighboring districts.
- Put everything in writing. Agreements should specify conditions for terminating any cooperative arrangement.
- Keep the public informed. Parents and some students may not relish moving between schools located in other towns.
- Stress the educational benefits of cooperative agreements.

Some examples of shared services and programs:

Pooling students — In New York State, three

small Hudson River villages have a plan under which courses available at only one of the three are open to other students. Two of the districts have common schedules to accommodate students. . . . School districts in Tulsa County, Okla., have set up a cooperative alternative school for students in grades 7-12. . . . Leyden Township, Ill., encourages students to shuttle between two high school buildings, so that they may take advantage of programs not available to them at their home schools.

Sharing teachers — Small high schools in Buena Vista County, Iowa, have developed a plan for teachers to travel between several schools — as many as seven, in some instances. They teach foreign languages, making intensive use of audio tapes for student self-instruction. . . . Sharing teachers, nothing new in Alaska, is used extensively in remote areas of the state.

Providing special facilities — Some districts see to it that the special facilities are brought to the students; others bring the students to the facilities. . . . Hackensack, N.J., is the host district for grade 11 students from nearby districts who come to a local hospital to work in different departments. They then take courses in anatomy, physiology and medical terminology at Hackensack High School. . . . In rural Midwestern states, school districts have for a number of years used mobile facilities to bring to students equipment for vocational education. Such practices are beginning to spread, as one response to declining enrollments.

Working Through Regional Mechanisms

More than 30 states already have mechanisms for sharing services and facilities among local school districts. They are either school study councils, regional educational service agencies, BOCES (boards of cooperative educational services), or regional consortia. They usually require approval or direction from the state education agency. They may be used for educational purposes (sharing programs and specialized courses, sharing teachers, sharing instructional materials) or for central non-academic functions (purchasing, data processing, warehousing).

For the single high school district, such cooperative mechanisms may mean the difference between a secondary school program that's meager and inadequate and one that meets the many needs of either college preparatory or job-bound youths.

Note: One approach for a district without such a regional mechanism is to get in touch with neighboring districts — and together approach the state department of education for advice on how to set one up.

> ***"Left to drift or tradition, the high school that grows smaller will grow weaker. But even the smallest high school can become a little giant for the educational good of the community if we plan, reorganize and reform."*** — Unidentified speaker from the floor at a session on declining enrollment held at the AASA annual convention, Atlanta, February 1981.

Regional mechanisms can provide the same type of interchange benefits as contracts with districts for direct sharing — only more of them.

Thus, regional agencies in different parts of the country provide itinerant vocational education teachers, who bring their teaching equipment and facilities in vans or trucks; develop instructional materials, especially of the audiovisual categories; offer a central service for gifted; make available part-time teachers for courses which a small district by itself could not support; and make available staffs in psychological services, art, music and foreign languages.

Lincoln-Sudbury, Mass.: Energizing the High School

As the high school gets smaller, can it become stronger?

Yes, declare the administration and faculty of the Lincoln-Sudbury Regional School District, which maintains a secondary school for the two Massachusetts towns. (At one time, the enrollment of the high school was more than 2,000. Today, it is about 1,400; projections point to further decline to 1,100.)

Determined to do something about the decline, an Administrative Reorganization Committee, composed primarily of staff members, "took testimony" from school committee (board) members, parents, a state legislator, the editor of the local newspaper, college officials, a minister and municipal officials. The question before them: What should be the role of the high school in the next decade?

"Growing smaller, while painful in many respects," the committee concluded after intensive

study, "offers us the opportunity of regaining a heightened sense of community." The way to gain closer community ties, as enrollment shrinks, is to reassess and readjust major aspects of the secondary school: curriculum, building use, morale of constituents, student relations, community involvement.

The committee found flaws which appear to be more than local in nature and made recommendations which have near universal implication. Consider these:

✓ Too many courses are offered, particularly in English and history, resulting in too few sections of some courses, particularly in offerings which are deemed of universal value.

✓ The average student is not given the benefit of time, skill and resources accorded the bright student.

✓ Parents and students are confused by what they see as a fragmented curriculum.

✓ Parents and students are often unfamiliar with the content and methodology of particular courses before students signs up for them. Students would like, and need, clear descriptions of each course so they can decide whether it will meet their needs. The course description should cover not only content but also the teaching method to be used.

In what the Lincoln-Sudbury group labeled a major recommendation, it urged a core curriculum "for those students who wish to take it." The core curriculum would consist of a standard set of courses that a student could take in each department, progressively from grade 9 through 12. Each department would define the components of the core and coordinate them through the academic standards committee of the school.

Turning to questions of morale, the committee came up with observations that might be true for many a high school in the country:

"Some faculty members feel unappreciated by the administration, their peers and the community. And they feel uninvolved in what should be a creative institution. . . .

"Some students feel isolated or intimidated and as a defense form cliques. This leads not only to a lack of general school spirit, but to negative feelings toward those outside the clique.

"The community often feels it is not listened to. . . ."

As moves toward remedying these weaknesses, the Lincoln-Sudbury committee urged more inservice education activities for teachers; more recognition of student achievement through awards ("We strongly recommend a Scholar of the Week Award — and the creation of a truly representative student government with some decision-making power"); and, finally, greater involvement of parents in high school plans and programs and more efforts on the part of the school to communicate with the home. ("We suggest a regular column written by teachers in the local papers.")

"Communities build a sense of identification with high schools, and superintendents' announcements of their closings bring out strong loyalties. North High School in Columbus illustrates the case of a school with a proud tradition and many prominent alumni. Had political considerations been first and foremost, we could never have closed it. This was undoubtedly our most difficult closing. And even when a high school does not have strong traditions, announcement of its impending closing seems to result in a rapid development of same." — Damon Asbury, Columbus (Ohio) Public Schools.

Richmond, Va.: Decline in Students, Not Quality

A district with more than one high school should become familiar with the approach used in Richmond, Va. This district had — and still has — seven high schools. When, in 1977, high school enrollments began to droop, the educational committee came up with an innovative plan, which "we've not been able to find the likes of anywhere else in the country," said Nate Lee, the district's community relations director.

At no time were there any serious intentions to close any one of the schools. Instead, the seven high schools were grouped into three complexes. Three high schools, those in close proximity, became one complex, with a total enrollment of 3,500 students. Two high schools each were joined into additional complexes. Each complex is under a coordinating principal, but each building retains its own principal as well.

The plan went into effect in the fall of 1979, and

Fewer Students Can Improve High Schools, NASSP Chief Says

Take advantage of declining enrollment to bring big high schools down to a more manageable size.

That's the advice Scott Thomson, executive director of the Washington-based National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), is giving to school administrators and board members.

The trend toward high schools with as many as 3,000 students was a big mistake, in Thomson's opinion. His recommendation: Limit enrollment in high schools to 1,200 to 1,500 students and in junior high schools to 800 students.

"So much is lost in the way of social glue when a school gets too big," he said in an interview with George Neill for the April 1980 issue of *Phi Delta Kappan*. When this is lost, he added, students lose an important sense of security.

"I believe a school is too large when pupils and teachers don't know each other by name," he said. "Research is clear that vandalism rises in a direct line with the size of the school.

"There is no statistical difference in achievement between big or small schools," the NASSP chief explained, "but evidence is plentiful that student attitudes toward learning are better in smaller schools."

two years later, district officials "are most pleased with the results." The main reason for their satisfaction is that "despite fewer students we can offer all the variety and high quality courses for all students that we offered prior to the decline."

As examples, the Richmond administration submits that the secondary schools offer advanced physics — "something we could not have done without the organization into complexes." Courses in mathematics, foreign languages and the fine arts all have been preserved. Otherwise, they might have been abandoned because of low enrollments.

Richmond administrators list other advantages and characteristics:

Reduction in capital improvement expenditures: "There is no need to upgrade duplicate facilities within each complex."

Flexible scheduling: "Excess students from an overcrowded class in one building can be transferred to the same class in another building."

Revival of extraclass activities: "A small student body in a building cannot support a rich extracurricular program. The complex approach has brought about a revival of many student clubs. Student government is alive and well in each building and is linked with an elected student executive council for each complex."

Benefits for athletics: "With ample numbers of students within a complex vying for participation, we can now maintain varsity, junior varsity and freshman interscholastic sports. Before the complex went into effect, this was not possible."

One graduation exercise: "Each complex of schools stages a graduation program of its own. Students are allowed to have either the name of the complex or of the home building placed on the diploma."

Neighborhoods pleased: "Former names of individual schools figure prominently in all complex activities. This has pleased students, parents, alumni and community groups."

Hedge against future enrollment increases: "Although Richmond is losing some population, and a decrease in high school enrollment may follow national trends, one never knows. There is talk now and then of new developments. Because we have kept all the high schools intact, we can handle any future increases that may come along."

Richmond's approach to the administration of the complexes is worthy of note. Before the complexes

went into operation, all supervisory positions were "abolished," at least in their old form. New job descriptions were developed and posted. The new job descriptions and the interviews with candidates that followed gave the administration a fresh look at the people and their roles under the consolidation plan.

Assistant building principals serve in each school on a ratio of one for every 600 students. The building principals report to the coordinating principal of each complex. The coordinating principals are responsible for curriculum, operational and supervisory standards, reporting to the assistant superintendent for secondary education.

The months of transition were not all rosy. Parents grumbled about the possible eradication "of their schools." Students feared the loss of "their school colors, mascots, traditions." Faculty members raised many worried questions about job security and new assignments. Building principals resented the appointment of coordinating principals as "an infringement of their authority." Finally, however, the principals saw that the new structure would reduce their paperwork and give them more time for curriculum work and for more contacts with faculty, parents and students. They accepted the change.

The community, too, accepted the change; and this was because of the intensive participation in planning of "hundreds of citizens, parents, taxpayers — every spectrum of the population"; and also because of the flow of information about the new ideas — "information which flowed and flowed and never seemed to end," according to one spokesman for the Richmond district.

Mason City, Iowa: Putting First Things First

In recent years, Roger A. Clough, superintendent of the Mason City (Iowa) Community Schools, has been sharing information about the method used in his district to decide which school programs and services may be eliminated in the face of enrollment decline and inflation and which must remain.

The process involves (1) program advisory committees, (2) use of a decision matrix and (3) a host of facts about the schools and their programs.

Mason City has used three advisory committees (elementary, junior and senior high school), made up of parents and certificated and noncertificated staff. The matrix is an instrument devised by George L. Morrissey, management consultant, to help individuals arrange their priorities. Morrissey has described the matrix and how to use it in *Management by Objectives and Results in the Public Sector* (Addison-Wesley; 1976).

Clough applied the matrix procedure to help determine priorities at the elementary, junior and senior high school levels.

Using the high school as an illustration, we offer a glimpse of how the procedure works:

The administration provides the senior high school program advisory committee with detailed information about all major educational and support activities for which budgeting is required. Program descriptions include facts about state requirements, about the district's practices with regard to the course offerings or support activities and about the percentage of the budget allocated for that activity.

Here, in much abbreviated form, is the kind of information that the program descriptions offer:

Foreign language: The state requires that two years of one foreign language be offered at the senior high school. . . . Mason City has exceeded the state requirements for years. . . . The district believes that as many foreign languages as possible shall be offered for a four year sequence. . . . Fully certified staff are used. . . . The budget for foreign languages is approximately 2.4 percent of the total senior high budget and .5 percent of the total district budget.

Instrumental music: There is no state requirement that instrumental music be taught. . . . Mason City has been a leader in employing certified instrumental music instructors to teach techniques and direct bands and orchestras. . . . The district maintains bands and orchestras that provide ensemble-playing experiences for every student: concert, symphonic, jazz and pep bands; string and full orchestras. . . . The instrumental music budget is approximately 2.9 percent of the total senior high school budget and .6 percent of the total district budget.

Alternative school: The state does not require that a school district maintain an alternative school. . . . This district does. . . . It is designed for students (about 75 in all) who have not adapted to the established school. . . . The alternative school represents 4.7 percent of the total high school budget and 1 percent of the total district budget.

Paraprofessionals: The state does not require that school districts employ paraprofessionals. . . . The district employs them at all grades, K-12. . . . The senior high paraprofessionals require 2.8 percent of the total senior high budget and .6 percent of the total district budget. . . .

And so, in much greater detail than suggested here, run pages after pages of program description.

With this information before them, advisory committee members weigh the value and desirability of each activity and, using the decision matrix, recommend to the administration to put first things first, what can go and what must stay.

Call it program prioritization.

In a statement to the board reviewing the reports from the advisory priority rating committee, Clough said: "It was the general consensus that the instrument used for evaluating the various programs was a valid instrument and that it did exactly what it was designed to do, which was to establish a procedure for forcing a choice between programs and thus obtain a priority rating of the programs."

Note: Recently, in commenting about the use of the process, Clough said: "One of the things we learned from this experience (of establishing priorities) was that we should have involved even larger groups of parents."

For more information, contact Clough at the Mason City Community Schools, Mason City, Iowa 50401; phone (515) 421-6202.

Useful Resource

Planning for Declining Enrollment in Single High School Districts is a 78-page report of a series of discussions by representatives of six single high school districts and staff members of the Educational Facilities Laboratories. The project was supported by the National Institute of Education. For current price and copies of the report, write to Academy for Educational Development, EFL Division, 680 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10019.

Other AASA Critical Issues Reports

Collective Bargaining: Problems and Solutions. Most of the nation's school administrators have a relatively new chore called collective bargaining — and many of them think it has a negative effect on their schools. This report can help administrators and school boards improve their understanding of the negotiating process. It offers advice on what to include and what to leave out of negotiated contracts. It cautions districts, for example, not to give away management prerogatives. Also included is advice from negotiations experts on: contract language, table strategies, impasse, contract administration, grievances and arbitration, communications, salaries, fringe benefits, reduction in force clauses. Two special sections — on nonunionized districts and bargaining for administrators — round out the book. (95pp; 1981; single copy, $10.95; Stock No. 021-00330)

Student Discipline: Problems and Solutions. A large number and variety of measures now exist for preventing and coping with unacceptable student behavior. This report defines: how school boards set the course for discipline; how the student handbook can be an indispensable instrument for the management of student conduct; how to tap student resources; 15 ways to get parents involved; what teachers can do; and the latest tips and advice on curriculum improvement, reducing vandalism and violence, smoking, in-school suspension, corporal punishment, and suspension and expulsion. One of the 10 "must reading" books selected by the National School Boards Association in its 1980 annual roundup of education books. (80pp; 1980; single copy, $9.95; Stock No. 021-00334)

How Schools Can Save $$: Problems and Solutions. The problem confronting schools today and during the years ahead is stark — expenses are going up at a rapid rate and income is not going up fast enough to meet the added cost. Consequently, balancing the school budget in the 1980s is going to be one of the toughest jobs confronting school administrators and school boards. This report includes "how to" advice, suggestions from experts and case studies on cutting the costs of the most expensive items in any district's budget. Included, for example, are: 15 budget cutting concepts; how to reduce staffing costs; facts and tips on negotiating salary increases and fringe benefits; how to reduce energy and insurance costs. (80pp; 1980; single copy, $8.95; Stock No. 021-00333)

Teacher Competency: Problems and Solutions. The testing of new and on-the-job teachers is already under way in several states and school districts. This report tells what researchers are finding out about what makes a "good" teacher and what administrators can do to improve teachers and to help principals better perform their jobs as instructional leaders. In-depth information is included on the "new look" in inservice education and on teacher centers. Special features give tips on how to reward teachers for good teaching and how several school districts eliminate time-wasters that cut into instructional time and reduce teacher effectiveness. One of the 10 "must reading" books selected by the National School Boards Association in its 1980 annual roundup of education books. (80pp; 1980; single copy, $8.95; Stock No. 021-00332)

Keeping Students in School: Problems and Solutions. Student truancy — always a problem — is getting worse, according to administrators who run the nation's schools. This report provides an in-depth look at truancy, as well as other aspects of student attendance. It also suggests solutions to the attendance problems considered critical by the more than 1,400 school administrators who answered a Critical Issues Survey. It examines why students stay away from school; the issue of dropouts (who, how many, why); what demographic trends reveal about attendance patterns in the future; and how schools are coping with attendance problems through tougher policies and programs. (79pp; 1979; single copy, $8.95; Stock No. 021-00331)

Staff Dismissal: Problems and Solutions. Who says teachers and other school employees can't be fired? They can. School districts can dismiss teachers and other staff members in cases of incompetency or when declining enrollment or budget problems demand cuts. This report examines the following questions raised by more than 1,700 AASA members in a Critical Issues Survey: What can be done about incompetence? What are the steps in building a dismissal case? What can be learned from districts that have successfully dismissed staff? What about teacher tenure, alternatives to RIFfing, and due process requirements? One of 10 "must reading" books selected by the National School Boards Association from among 2,500 new education titles in 1978. (80pp; 1978; single copy, $8.95; Stock No. 021-00512)

The Competency Movement: Problems and Solutions. This report provides a comprehensive analysis of the reasons underlying the minimum competency movement. It answers the questions of more than 1,500 AASA members who responded to a Critical Issues Survey. It includes: reasons behind the competency movement; considerations in adopting a policy on mimimum competency; what kinds of tests can be used; the pros and cons of issuing a single diploma or certificate and available alternatives; case studies of how various districts and states are implementing competency requirements. A national clearinghouse on minimum competency testing called this report "perhaps the best single source of information on competency testing." (92pp; 1978; single copy, $8.95; Stock No. 021-00510)

School Energy Crisis: Problems and Solutions. Schools don't have to sit immobilized while they're clobbered by higher and higher energy costs. This report provides answers to the concerns expressed by more than 3,400 AASA members who replied to a Critical Issues Survey. Topics covered include the following: the energy crisis — impact on the nation's schools; energy audits, the basis for savings; how to hire energy consultants; advice on energy saving construction; reducing transportation costs; model programs, ideas, contacts. One of 11 "must reading" books selected by the National School Boards Association in its 1977 annual roundup of education books. (88pp; 1977; single copy, $8.95; Stock No. 021-00380)

Discount and Ordering Information

Order from the American Association of School Administrators, 1801 N. Moore St., Arlington, Va. 22209. To order a single copy of any report, please add $1.50 for postage and handling. Orders for less than $15 must be accompanied by payment in full. Discount on any Critical Issues Report: two to nine copies, 10% discount. Write for prices of 10 or more copies. Please indicate stock numbers on orders.

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